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- Cover picture Contemporary engravings of two interiors of an ice palace (from a book reviewed on page 171) built in 1740 by the Russian Empress Anne (Yanovna) at a honeymoon cottage for an out-of-favour prince whom she forced to marry a servant.

## Minds, great and small

### Malcolm Bowie

EDWARD J. HUGHES  
*Marcel Proust: A study in the quality of awareness*  
212pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50.  
0521247683

MARCEL PROUST  
*Selected Letters, 1880-1903*  
Edited by Philip Kolb, translated by Ralph Manheim  
376pp. Collins. £15.95.  
0002118726

*A Search for Lost Time: Swann's Way*  
Translated by James Grieve  
346pp. Canberra: Australian National University Press. \$A16.95.  
090113176

In those distant days when such notions as "self", "consciousness" and "mind" still circulated among writers and caused them no shame, an incomparable team of collectors and custodians were at work upon the mental states of Europe. For Proust, Musil, Svevo and Canetti the mind existed, and was a fabric indefinitely subject to variations of colour, weight and weave. How acquisitive they all were and how impressive the range of their mind-stuffs: within one character, or across a spectrum of characters, the multifarious possible forms of the mental life were pressing to be born. For Proust and Musil in particular a newly discovered mental style, an unsuspected extremity of consciousness, could provide their capacious narratives with dramatic impetus of the kind that an earlier age had sought in pistol-shots, adulteries and financial crashes.

Edward J. Hughes's aim in his compellingly original study is to focus attention upon the coarser textures in Proust's account of mind and from that vantage-point to re-examine the fine-spun introspective analyses for which *A la recherche du temps perdu* is endlessly acclaimed. He gathers abundant evidence to show that Proust the hyper-aware investigator of mental process was fascinated by simple or vacant minds and by minimal intellectual performances. Within the narrator's toiling self-consciousness, strange abandoned creatures loom up rather as Wordsworth's leech-gatherer did before the wandering poet - resembling a stone, a sea-beast or a cloud rather than a sentient self, and seeming to offer no more than momentary refuge for the human capacity to think. Proust's narrator characterizes such people fervently and without condescension: Of thought, in relation to François, one could hardly speak. She knew nothing, in that absolute sense in which to know nothing means to understand nothing, save the rare truths to which the heart is capable of directly attaining. The vast world of ideas did not exist for her. But when one studied the clearness of her gaze, the delicate lines of the nose and the lips, all those signs lacking from so many cultivated people in whom they would have signified a supreme distinction, the noble detachment of a rare mind, one was disoriented, as one is by the frank, intelligent eyes of a dog, to which nevertheless one knows that all our human conceptions are alien, and one might have been led to wonder whether there may not be, among those other humbler brethren, the peasants, individuals who are as it were the élite of the world of the simple-minded, or rather who, condemned by an unjust fate to live among the simple-minded, deprived of enlightenment and yet more naturally, more essentially akin to the chosen spirits than more educated people, are metaphors as it were, dispersed, arrayed, robbed of their heritage of reason, of the sacred family, kindred, left behind in infancy, of the loftiest minds: in whom - as is apparent from the unmistakable light in their eyes, although it is applied to nothing - there has been lacking, to endow them with talent, only the gift of knowledge.

Where François receives her mindlessness as a divine benefaction, other characters achieve theirs by repeated acts of will. Their retreat from thought takes a variety of routes - into sexuality, into homely wisdom, into military discipline, into sleep. But this does not mean that Proust's account of mind is scattered through a variety of circumstantial insights. Indeed, Hughes powerfully rebuts the idea, which has been popular, that the novel is a desultory archive of mental states, appetites and dispositions. Not knowing and not thinking are recurrent objects of desire for the narrator, and the characters who remove their selves from thought or are dispensed from it - François, the grandmother, the "jeunes filles en blanc", the officers at Doncières, Albertine

- are performing a tantalizing epistemological shadow-play before his anxious gaze: they represent the mind not simply in retreat but waking up, on the other side of dullness or stupidity or regimentation, to new capacities for delight. And the narrator's artistic project, when it is finally formulated in *Le Temps retrouvé*, is designed to accommodate and promote his own deliciously raw mental states and to free him from debilitating introspection. Other minds, rather empty and rather clumsy, are premonitions of his own at its fullest and finest. By spelling out clearly the long-range calculations by which Proust builds towards the climax of his narrator's mental drama, Hughes is able to rescue numerous remarkable passages from what have often seemed the margins of the book.

Like many of its predecessors, this study moves in patient chronological stages towards the summit that Proust had already provided. How can it seem other than natural and sensible for critics in search of a dénouement to end their books as Proust ended his - by describing the narrator's final accession to creative poten-

cy and plenitude? But there are problems in being so sensible. For this new-found artistic intelligence, programmatically unveiled in the closing pages of the novel, has been at work, variously and unrelentingly, from the very first paragraph. And although all critics of note know this, not all of them know how to write Proust's extraordinary textual inventiveness into their own plots. Hughes encounters the problem in this form: Proust, in his discussions of simple-mindedness, is never minded to be simple. François's dog-like gaze, in the passage I have quoted, becomes the gaze that one might expect from members of the Holy Family - Proust is a fleet-footed blasphemer - just as he has already read Proust's novel in English and found themselves wanting to know more about the emotional and stylistic workshop from which this supremely complex artefact emerged. Many of the letters collected here are experiments in feeling: whether Proust is ex-

pressing filial adoration or homosexual ardour or concern for the health and glory of his favourite society tigresses, the tone often seeks not simply to discharge emotion but to discover how much of it there is and how best it can be manipulated. During these years Proust's letters are strenuously orchestrated even when anecdotal and try out an astonishing array of stylistic registers. The arts being tested are often the lesser ones of gossip, badinage, flirtation and flattery, but these very arts, perfected, transcended, helped to give *A la recherche* its unique versatility of tone.

Proust writes to Reynaldo Hahn's sister, for example:

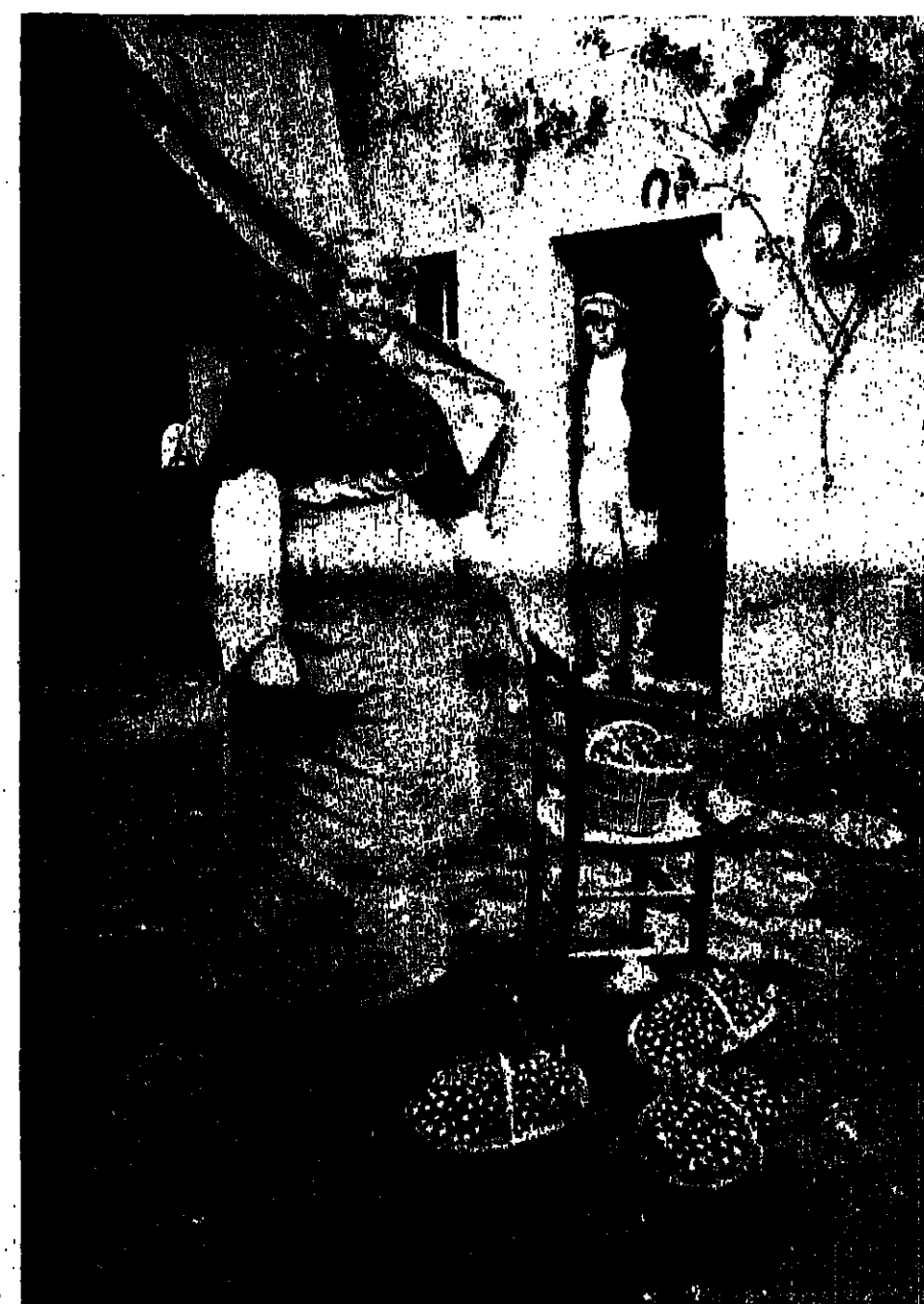
My nerves are frayed from insomnia, but I am enjoying my visit here thanks to Reynaldo, and you are associated with all my impressions, oh, my sister Marie, confident of my thoughts, hearme of the sad, source of goodness, spice of wit, sparkling rose, courageous kindness, breeze upon the sea, song of happy oars, shuddering sea foam, glory of morning, perfume of friendship, soul of the nights which you dazzle with your brilliance...

And so, exhaustively, it goes on. This letter, as Cocking remarks in his delightfully pointed introduction, "might have been written by Legrandin in a moment of delirium". And exactly the delirium of such utterances - the attempt to supersaturate experience with words - was to become a major source of comedy in Proust's novel. In training in these letters is the parodic imagination which was eventually to produce the grandiose verbal aberrations of Legrandin, Norpois, Cottard and Brichot - those accomplished professional people who each have a manic appetite for redundancy in speech. This range of character-portraits is based upon Proust's sense of stupidity not as a native condition of certain minds but as a localized mental lesion. In these cases, which are quite different from those mainly studied by Hughes, fatuously bludgeoning verbal performances are perfectly compatible with intellectual adroitness and professional success. Off their guard, obedient to the whims of salon society, preening themselves at parties, the engineer, the ambassador, the doctor and the academic speak their passions with visceral insistence and abandon.

In this extraordinarily revealing volume, Proust not only provides a laboratory notebook towards that "physiology of chatter" which so excited Walter Benjamin in *A la recherche*, but explores, again in an improvised preliminary fashion, the subject which, above all others in the novel, was to show the viscera of the professional class dangerously astir: the Dreyfus case. The energetic satire of contemporary antisemitic discourse which we eventually find in the novel begins modestly enough in these letters. Antisemitism is a pervasive force in the society Proust chooses to frequent and the paths that it follows in everyday conversation are traced by him with saddened vigilance. Writing to Hahn about dinner at the Daudets, for example, he is prepared, perhaps over-generously, to allow Alphonse Daudet his talent and his charm, yet finds the suspicion of Jews and the explanations by "race" which permeate the household an affront to the very powers of mind that Daudet in other respects emblemizes. Daudet is at once "a pure and brilliant intellect" and "simplistic in his intelligence". Having studied such mental hybrids and moral amphibians over countless dinner-tables, and having lightly sketched them for friends, Proust went on, in *A la recherche*, to produce a weighty critique of the society which fostered them.

But these letters which prefigure so much in the novel are not themselves works of art and do not offer short-cuts to any useful sense of what Proust's eventual achievement was to be; it was in his novel and not in his correspondence that he rose to the level of Mme de Sévigné. To anyone new to Proust and struck by the tempting silliness of this volume I would suggest: wait a couple of years and read *A la recherche* first.

But which version to read? Suddenly this choice is getting richer. The latest one can say of James Grieve's predicament in beginning to publish his new translation in the wake of Terence Kilmarin's revision of Scott Moncrieff is that the world would have been a kinder place if a whisper from someone in publishing, or a timely chirrup from a migratory Proustian, had



Eugène Delacroix's "Femme de Verrières" (1922), an albumen print by Chicago Albumen Works from the original negative by Delacroix, on show at the Serpentine Gallery from March 3 until April 1.

as Hughes persuades us, the wondrous elasticity of the Proustian *res cogitans* would have been lost without them. The new pattern described by Hughes is so obvious once it has been seen that one wonders what repressive mechanisms within our literary culture can have been keeping it invisible until now. What has led us to value introspection so highly?

The English selection of Proust's early letters that has been produced by a distinguished triumvirate: Philip Kolb, editor, John Cocking, introducer, and Ralph Manheim, translator. The volume which results from their concerted labours will be of special interest to those who have already read Proust's novel in English and found themselves wanting to know more about the emotional and stylistic workshop from which this supremely complex artefact emerged. Many of the letters collected here are experiments in feeling: whether Proust is ex-

فكر في هذا



## Beyond God and evil

Chaim Bermant

ETTY HILLESUM  
Bity: A Diary 1941-43  
Translated by Arnold J. Pomerans  
226pp. Cape. £8.50.  
0224021214

Reviewing this book is rather like reviewing the Book of Job. It is an extraordinary human document, so extraordinary in fact that I had to pause every now and again to ask if it could be authentic. By the end I felt it didn't matter for if this is a work of fiction it is a work of such imagination and power as to have the validity of fact.

Her attitude to God is equally perplexing. Though nominally Jewish, her attitudes, at first, seem fairly pagan, so that when she writes, "I felt that God's world was beautiful despite everything, but its beauty now filled me with joy", she may be using the divine name figuratively. But as the months pass, God virtually takes over and begins to dominate her thoughts. Yet this is not another tormented soul turning to the heavens in *extremis*, but rather a gradual intrusion of divine light; she spends hours on her knees with prayers of her own invention, and rises with her soul renewed. Her very resilience sometimes troubles her:

Does that mean I am never sad, that I never rebel, always acquiesce, and love life no matter what the circumstances? No, far from it. I believe I know and share the many sorrows and sad circumstances that human being can experience, but I do not cling to them, I do not prolong such moments of agony. They pass through me, like life itself, as a broad, eternal stream, they become part of that stream, and life continues. And as a result my strength is preserved, does not become tagged on to futile sorrow or rebelliousness.

And even as she writes her circumstances become more oppressive. At first the Jews are treated no worse than the Dutch, but then they are required to wear yellow stars, and once they are singled out from the rest of the population, decree follows decree with increasing rapidity and growing harshness. They are forbidden to drive and are banned from public transport; they have to surrender their bicycles; parks, cafés, restaurants are closed to them; they are barred from certain thoroughfares; they can only buy from Jewish shops, and then only between the hours of three and five; they cannot venture out of doors after eight at night. Finally come the round-ups and deportations, first to the Dutch camp at Westerbork, and thence to Auschwitz. All such things are mentioned in passing, laconically, almost obliquely, like her own pregnancy, and it is only at the very end, when she is herself in Westerbork, that she emerges for a moment from her inner self to describe what is happening in the hell around her. Spier is dead by then. Her family has been rounded up and is awaiting transportation, and she herself is sick, in pain and almost unable to move, but even then she finds time for prayer; not to please, however, but in *thanksgiving*.

You have made me so rich, oh God, please let me share out your beauty with open hands. My life has become an uninterrupted dialogue with you, oh God, one great dialogue. Sometimes when I am in some corner of the camp, my feet planted on your earth, my eyes raised towards Your Heaven, tears sometimes run down my face, tears of deep emotion and gratitude.

Job seems an ingrate by comparison, for there does come a moment when his spirit breaks and he rails against the heavens. There comes a moment too when Etty exclaims: "God Almighty what are you doing to us?" but in the main she staggers through the valley of the shadow of death in a mood verging on euphoria. Her attitude to God is almost as irritating as her attitude to the Gestapo.

The introduction tells us that both Jews and Christians have found in Etty someone typically Jewish or typically Christian, and derisively she derives great solace from the Bible, which she carries with her to the end. But it gradually emerges that her God isn't her God; for she writes: "I repose in myself. And that part of me, the deepest and richest part in which I repose, is what I call 'God'." In other words, the Kingdom of Heaven is within her, and persists within her in spite of her experience of the divine plan.

I have been torn by conflicting emotions in reading this book, but finally put it down with a feeling of awe. Like Job Etty revives one's faith in man, through it diminishes one's faith in God.

when even Etty sees through him and complains ruefully of his tendency to abuse his position as a therapist. Yet, in the main, she looks on him as a sort of saviour and he is a powerful figure in her book; but she is a complex personality, in control of her emotions, and one half suspects that she willed herself into love with Spier much as she willed herself out of hatred for the Germans, or that in pumping her soul of hatreds she became too accessible to love.

Her attitude to God is equally perplexing. Though nominally Jewish, her attitudes, at first, seem fairly pagan, so that when she writes, "I felt that God's world was beautiful despite everything, but its beauty now filled me with joy", she may be using the divine name figuratively. But as the months pass, God virtually takes over and begins to dominate her thoughts. Yet this is not another tormented soul turning to the heavens in *extremis*, but rather a gradual intrusion of divine light; she spends hours on her knees with prayers of her own invention, and rises with her soul renewed. Her very resilience sometimes troubles her:

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## Universally feminine

Phyllis Willmott

ANN OAKLEY  
Taking It Like a Woman  
212pp. Cape. £7.95.  
024021184

Ann Oakley is the author of a number of sociological books reporting her own research on previously neglected subjects such as housework and maternity, as well as others of a more polemical – and explicitly feminist – kind. *Taking It Like a Woman* is an autobiography which aims to represent through her own life story the experiences and dilemmas of women's lives in general. Mrs Oakley uses the device of interweaving factual accounts of her experience with material which, she says, is fiction but might, it seems, be either fictionalised fact or personal fantasy. An important point is not what is "real" or "imagined" but how effective the technique has proved to be in answering the kind of question which she poses: what makes someone into a feminist? what sort of person is a feminist? how can a feminist be part of a society organized in terms of sexual difference and "the family"? what is the nature of the love between men and women? how do we deal with the fact that we're not going to live for ever? It is clear from these questions that the author was either unable or unwilling to confine herself to wholly feminist issues.

Ann Oakley had the good fortune to be (though she does not present it in this light herself) the exceptional child of exceptional parents. Her father, Richard Titmuss, was a figure of great eminence in the field of social policy. Her mother, Kay, gave up a promising career of her own to devote herself to husband and family. So Ann grew up in a stimulating intellectual environment that encouraged her precocious abilities. Long before she reached Oxford she had begun to write and by the time she left she had come through a threatened breakdown and was already married to the man she had decided, on sight, she wanted as a

husband. In the following sixteen months she wrote "two novels, fourteen short stories, six non-fiction articles, started and decided not to finish a children's history textbook and completed four different bits of research". In the next sixteen months she produced two children; it was the tension between these two parts of life which eventually were to lead her to feminism – and to a successful multi-career as feminist, sociologist and mother. To those tempted to ask what relevance such a story can possibly have for the "ordinary" woman the answer is that the book is built round the author's experience of childbirth, marriage, the death of a beloved father and a passionate love affair. Her accounts of childbirth, of the love between her and her father, the hard-won partnership with her husband, the flooding emotions and sexual passion roused by her lover (whether largely real or largely imagined) are movingly and sometimes brilliantly chronicled.

Thus the "universal" appeal of the book is not that it is about feminism (or, more precisely, one exceptional feminist) but that it is about events in the life of one woman which, despite her unordinariness, reflect the experience of many other women. At the same time, a remarkable defect of the book is that women – apart from Ann Oakley – figure so little in it. "To be feminist means putting women first", she says; but it does not seem to be a precept she finds easy to practise. On the contrary, there is a strong impression underlying her account that women remain rivals. Her mother, for example (surely the first and most dangerous of all rivals for almost all women), is firmly placed in the shadows. Then again, no friendships with women merit more than a line here and there. Even the women who were her introduction to feminism (and therefore so crucial in her movement towards self-development and liberation) get barely a page and are treated with something more like detached disdain than gratitude or admiration. But perhaps it is time for a feminist to write more about loving men rather than fighting and hating them, and certainly in this Ann Oakley has succeeded.

## Granny in decline

James Kirkup

YASUHI INOUE  
Chronicle of my Mother  
Translated by Jean Oda Moy  
164pp. Tokyo: Kodansha International.  
\$4.95.

Yasuhi Inoue is best known to Western readers by his brilliant novellas, *The Hunting Gun*, *The Counterfitter* and *Obsessive*. The last-named is most relevant to the book under review, because it deals with the legends of Mount Obasute, on which in the past old people used to be abandoned to die. In *Obsessive*, Inoue treats the theme in a semi-autobiographical manner, so that the characters of the author and his old mother emerge very much as they do in this highly realistic and personal chronicle of old age.

*Chronicle of my Mother* is divided into three sections which were originally published separately, at five-year intervals: "Under the Blossoms" (1964); "The Light of the Moon" (1969); and "The Surface of the Snow" (1974). They cover the ten years or so of his mother's decline into a senility that is at once pathetic, clinically factual and unexpectedly comic. Inoue records her gradual decline with great tenderness and concern, but quite without sentimentality. He begins with "memories of his father's death some years before", and then moves on to his mother's apparent indifference to that father's memory. Indeed, she often refers to a couple of brilliant young men she adored in her childhood, but who died in their teens, as if they had been old beards. Her failing memory is compared to an old scratched record in which the needle, sometimes sticks, playing the same words again and again.

Inoue was fortunate in being surrounded by a large family covering several generations, so that as Granny gradually got worse and began exhibiting those devoted to her care, she could be passed from one member of the family to the next. Also, they are all well-off, so there is

no lack of material comforts for the old lady. Never once is there any question of placing her in an old people's home; the traditional Japanese devotion to and respect of the old, now rapidly disappearing, are firmly upheld in this family, in which Granny often behaves as if she had reverted to childhood, with all the charm she must have had as a little girl: "sitting primly in Japanese fashion, with her hands in her lap . . . as if this were the proper etiquette for train travel. Mother behaved with the utmost decorum." Observing her at such moments, Inoue is struck by her little-girl gravity, and also by her loneliness, an isolation in spirit as well as in time from those around her.

As Granny moves towards one of the solemn dates in a Japanese person's life, the eighty-eighth birthday, she becomes increasingly restless and troublesome. She is a great runner, and is always dashing across the garden or along the road to a relative's house at a speed her own daughter finds hard to keep up with. Her sleeplessness and ghostly night-wanderings in her nightgown, visiting the rooms of all the sleeping family in turn and shining a pocket-torch in their faces, or stumbling along to the toilet, remind one strongly of Fumio Miwa's remarkable short story on a similar theme, *Iyagane no nenrei* (first published in 1947, and beautifully translated by the late Ivan Morris as "The Hateful Age" in his anthology *Modern Japanese Stories*).

The family depicted in Niwa's story are much less kind and sympathetic towards their old mother, and their material situation, just after the war, is not as good as the Inoues'; theirs is the more common attitude today among the young towards their aged parents, and this makes Inoue's chronicle all the more valuable and telling. Inoue has always written well about desolate and lonely figures, and in this extraordinary portrait of his own mother he has surpassed himself.

The American translation, apart from a few solecisms like the now-discredited "Caucasian" (for "non-Japanese" or "American"), is excellent.

## Survival aids

Julia O'Faolain

MAYA ANGELOU  
I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings  
281pp. Virago. Paperback, £3.95.  
0 86068 511 X

*I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* introduces an impressive woman. Though Maya Angelou, poet, actress, singer, dancer, journalist and black activist, does not describe her adult activities in this first instalment of her four-part autobiography, her varied talents shine in the vivacity with which she evokes her childhood. This was largely spent in Stamps, Arkansas, a rural, black community which she remembers as pivoting around church, revival meetings and her grandmother's general store.

Angelou's experience seems to fall naturally into emblematic scenes such as her arrival in Stamps at the age of three with a name-tag on her wrist. Her father had shipped her home from California to be raised by a grandmother whose fondness for piety and corporal punishment might have stunned Dickens. Angelou notes without resentment that piety was a source of strength when survival was dicey and that in the old South black families were so worried for their children that discipline had to be fierce. "For this reason", she observes, "Southern Blacks until this generation could be counted among America's arch conservatives." Piety was pleasing too in that whites could be expected to fall below its standards and "spend eternity trying in the fires of hell". Thence, no doubt, such puzzling exaggerations of these standards as led to the small Angelou being whipped for saying "by the way". Jesus, explained her grandmother, was the Way, so to use this expression was to take his name in vain.

A visit to her pretty mother in St Louis com-

pounds the child's bafflement. The mother works in a gambling parlour, and ethics on the city streets are worlds away from Arkansas. Bewildered by adult behaviour and perhaps too eager for affection, the eight-year-old girl is raped by her mother's lover – who is then found kicked to death behind the slaughterhouse. Unsure how responsible she is for this – her uncles probably did the kicking – she retreats into muteness and is soon shipped back to her grandmother. This episode, handled with moving tact, is the best thing in the book; Angelou has a delicate feel for the way children react to the opacity and slipperiness of the world. She is excellent too at portraying community life first in the South and later, during the war, in San Francisco, where she goes to live with her mother at a time when blacks are moving into districts freshly vacated by the interned Japanese: an ill wind.

Verve, nerve and joy in her own talents effervesce through this book. A product of the 1960s, it was first published in the US in 1969 and has the faults as well as the qualities of that decade: though brilliant with the particular, Miss Angelou can be sententious when moved to generalize. For example: "The Black female is assaulted from her tender years by all those common forces of nature at the same time that she is caught in the tripartite crossfire of masculine prejudice, white illogical hate and Black lack of power. . . . The fact that the adult American negro female emerges a formidable character is . . . seldom accepted as an inevitable outcome of the struggle won by survivors and deserves respect if not enthusiastic acceptance."

Is the rhetoric also inevitable, a survival aid like her grandmother's piety? In literary terms this, if so, is a pity but, after all, we put up with preachy bits in books like *Moll Flanders* and the compensatory pleasures here are no less stimulating.

## Peter Webb THE EROTIC ARTS A new paperback edition with additional material and photographs

"Peter Webb's approach is liberal. He attempts to draw a distinction between art and pornography and argues that both should be accessible to those whom they satisfy . . . The images are the best part . . . I'd recommend the book . . . to every school library. It contains some of the kind of images we all need to see from childhood onwards."

John Berger, Guardian

"Massive and comprehensive . . . carves a sexual swath through 2,000 years, ranging from Ancient Mexico to Marcuse, from Raphael and Ingres to Wagner and Warhol."

Nigel Gostling, Observer

£8.95

## Cynthia Ozick THE CANNIBAL GALAXY

"We have admired her in the past as a short-story writer . . . Now she emerges as a wonderfully witty novelist. Her language is to be watched, above all, for its perfect structures, tremulously exact; balances of the purest syntactical beauty which buzz with the vibrating stillness of perpetual motion."

Nigella Lawson, Financial Times

"A richly imagined . . . novel of ideas . . . This gift for combining solemnity and fun, a kind of cerebral frolicking . . . is a strong strand in the theme of duality, the tug of opposites, that runs through her novel."

Norman Shrapnel, Guardian

£7.95

## Joachim Maass KLEIST: A Biography Translated by Ralph Manheim

"Maass is a gifted all-rounder who combines man, life and work in a critical narrative and describes a handful of unfamiliar masterpieces with an empathy which will compel English readers to want to know better . . . That is a far-from-common gift in literary biographies."

D.J. Enright, Observer

"The first full biography to appear in English . . . is richly grounded in Kleist's age . . . Kleist's work speaks to us more directly and more powerfully than I ever did to his unheeding contemporaries."

J.R. Stern, Sunday Times

"The synopsis of the works, like the sketches of external events, are lucid and helpful not only to the newcomer."

Michael Ratcliffe, The Times

£12.95

Secker & Warburg

told him what a gigantic clutch Chatto and Windus were hatching. Competition is a fine thing, no doubt. But at a time when the queue of major European novels awaiting an English translator is already absurdly long, the idea that the Himalayan task of translating Proust was being grappled with twice over and on different sides of the globe has an absurdity, a time-and-motion recklessness, of its own. The situation we now have – Kilmartin complete in hardback and paperback, and Grieve elegantly launched under durable paper covers – has advantages nevertheless, and not simply that of encouraging rivalry in an unlikely corner of the market-place. For students of Proust, and of the translator's art, now have the luxury of binocular vision on to the teasing intricacies of Proust's text, and can allow themselves the further extravagance of the Scott Moncrieff *Urieux* as an occasional third eye.

Consider the following ornithological caprice from the scene of lesbian love-making at Montjouvain:

Dans l'échancrure de son corsage de crêpe, Mlle Vinteuil sentit que son amie piquait un baiser, elle poussa un petit cri, s'échappa, et elles se poursuivirent en sautant, faisant voler leurs larges manches comme des ailes et gloussant et piaillant comme des oiseaux amoureux.

In the V-shaped opening of her crape bodice Mlle Vinteuil felt the sting of her friend's sudden kiss; she gave a little scream and broke away; and then they began to chase one another about the room, scrambling over the furniture, their wide sleeves fluttering like wings, clucking and squealing like a pair of amorous fowls. (Kilmartin)

In the open neck of her mourning-dress, Mlle Vinteuil felt her friend peck a kiss, gave a little cry and evaded her; then they chased each other, leaping about the room, flapping their wide sleeves like wings, clucking and twittering like birds in amorous display. (Grieve)

Each translator harnesses different kinds of connotative energy from the original. Where Kilmartin and Scott Moncrieff (the latter in fact wrote most of the passage I quote) range freely in the animal, bird and insect worlds ("wing", "cluck", "quack", and "squeal") before bringing the image to rest in the tamest of Grieve's opts earlier even than Proust for birds ("peck"), sustains the suggestion firmly at the mid-point ("flap"), and culminates upon a

## Powers of creation

Phillip Thody

MARGUERITE YOURCENAR  
Le Temps, ce grand sculpteur: Essais  
246pp. Paris: Gallimard. 75fr.  
207026288X

When a great historical novelist, and the first woman to be elected to the Académie Française; publishes a volume of essays, she must be approached first and foremost by reference to her own work. Indeed, the third essay in this fascinating collection, "Ton et langage dans le roman historique", is so directly linked to the *Mémoires d'Hadrien* as to deserve publication as a preface to the novel, a kind of working notebook on the problems of setting about re-creating the way people spoke in the past when we have no audible records to guide us:

Similarly, and in so far as the best historical novels give us the spiritual essence of a civilization and not merely the superficial details of its physical existence, the admirably cultivated essay on Southern Spain, "L'Andalousie ou les Espérances", is an exploration of that country in terms of its complex Mediterranean political history and religious traditions. For Spain, as Marguerite Yourcenar observes, is like Greece in that it lies on the edge of the Mediterranean world, and has had to define itself in opposition to the "barrenness of the Islamic East" as well as to the mysterious emptiness of the Atlantic. And yet, perhaps for the very reason it has kept unchanged "the oldest state of the Roman inheritance, the one least touched by other cultures and ideologies, the one most common to the whole Mediterranean region, with its bundle of different races."

It is this contrast, argues Yourcenar, which helps to explain the harshness and realism of the Spanish character, and she suggests that "if we can bear the memory of so many inextinguishable fires, it is because this is a country where they appear more naked, more spontaneous."

feathered chorus ("cackle" and "twitter") quite indeterminate as to species and habitat. Both translations are ingenious and both preserve, despite these wide variations of zoological focus, the characteristic vigour of Proust on homosexuality. Images like this one, much exploited later in the novel, portray homosexuality as a startling glimpse of ever-amorous Nature and need to pull hard in different directions at once in order to make their point: wherever you look in the natural world this "unnatural" passion finds its reflection and its echo. As might be expected in any such sample, both translators also err: the "V-shaped opening" of a crape bodice, however appropriate to the garb of a Vinteuil, is a desperate gloss rather than a translation; and Grieve's "evade" brings an incongruous hint of calculation into this scene of animal sport.

If I may guess on the basis of Grieve's excellent first volume, the two versions of *A la recherche* are likely to show pronounced overall differences of flavour as well as teeming local disagreements on tone, nuance and the meaning of words. In his guileful emendations of Scott Moncrieff, Kilmartin was borne along on cascading Edwardian periods: he could work inventively in the troughs and hollows of Scott Moncrieff's prose without feeling that correctness was a peril or literalness a short step from pedantry. Kilmartin's correctness and Scott Moncrieff's surging stylistic momentum produced an extraordinary English book. Grieve, on the other hand, has begun from zero and without a patron. He seems to have approached Proust's text as a long series of puzzling semantic nuclei and to have seen his main task as that of ingesting each of them individually right. The *canillena* of Proust's writing, if it is to have one at all, must be sought and grasped beyond its broken surface textures; no cheating, no song that hasn't been worked for. This approach is a fascinating and instructive one. It brings to the fore and reinterprets a major facet of *A la recherche* – those lesser lexical adventures, with which Proust packed his sentences. And we have, of course, no other access to Proust's mind-stuff than by way of the opulent sentence-stuff to which he devoted his career.

and less hypocritical than elsewhere, almost innocent in their admission of the pleasure which man takes in making his fellows suffer". She is equally stimulating on the superiority which the erotic art of India has over that of Europe by its freedom from intellectualism and Christian guilt; on the literature of hunting; on the nature of the great Christian festivals; on the Yoga and Taoistic traditions; and on the writers who have helped her to a better understanding of them. Her quotation from a book by Jacques Massé – "La Mort nous suit toujours, mais n'allume pas toujours ses phares" – is only a sample of the poetry which runs through this book of essays, and which justifies the first of the comparisons which one is tempted to make.

For Yourcenar's texts on different civilizations, cultures and experiences resemble those of Paul Valéry in that it seems strangely inappropriate to describe them by a word which suggests a tentative and unfinished mode of writing. Like the studies in *Variété* on Stendhal or Flaubert, they are impeccably sculptured intellectual prose-poems and the resemblance does not end there. The text which gives this volume its title deals with the same contrast between artistic and natural creation which runs through *Epigones*, with the passage of time reshaping the statues of antiquity in the same way that the movement of the waves in Valéry's meditation on architecture has given an almost human form to certain shells.

Marguerite Yourcenar's short novel *Coups de Grâce* was originally published in 1939, and in 1957 appeared in English translation by herself in collaboration with Grace Frick. That translation, reviewed in the TLS November 22, 1957, has been reissued (151pp. Heinemann/Thames: Alden Ellis. £7.95. 0 85628 125 5). John Wiegman, reviewing her *Obsessive* in the TLS July 22, 1983, wrote "This novel is distinguished by some highly evocative descriptions . . . and it has a genuine power of even fragile vibration."



# Consciousness in practice

Rosemary Dinnage

JACQUES BARZUN  
A Stroll With William James  
344pp. University of Chicago Press. £16.  
0226038653

Place yourself at the centre of a man's philosophic vision and you understand at once all the different things it makes him write or say. But keep outside, use your post-mortem method, try to build the philosophy out of single phrases, taking first one and then another in seeking to make them fit and of course you fail. You crawl over the thing like a myopic ant over a building, tumbling into every microscopic crack or fissure, finding nothing but inconsistencies, and never suspecting that a centre exists. William James (he, not Jacques Barzun, is the author of the above) is so wonderfully quotable that, as Barzun says, he is now seen all too often as "a warm legend sustained by a few telling quotations". John McDermott, in an introduction to a selection of James's writings, has specifically warned against seeing him as just a fount of delightful quotations, and avoiding that philosophical centre that James refers to. But it is so much easier to patronize the lovable old grandfather of psychology who - all those years ago! imagine, before behaviourism and psychoanalysis and information theory and artificial intelligence! - rolled out so many pregnant phrases. Marvellous for his age, isn't he?

Pregnant phrases do abound in Professor Barzun's book; wherever I have underlined something I find it is James's, not Barzun's. "Probably a crab would be filled with a sense of personal outrage if it could hear us class it as a crustacean. 'I am no such thing', it would say, 'I am MYSELF, MYSELF alone.'" "I've been meeting minds so earnest and helpless that it takes them half an hour to get from one idea to its immediately adjacent next neighbour. And then they lie down on it with their whole weight and can get no farther, like a cow on a doormat." "Bad philosophy means 'utter relaxation of intellectual duty; and God will punish it if there's anything he hates, it is that kind of cozy writing.'" Another bit of Jamesiana (not in this) that is worth keeping for life is: "To sustain a representation, to think, is, in short, the only moral act, for the impulsive and the obstructed, for sane and lunatics alike." And when I face anything as fearsome as a book review on William James I recall his "slow, dead heave of the will" as I pick up my pen.

But this is quotation-hunting as warned against (though any such single quotation of his has a connection with central themes). The important question is, does Barzun in fact succeed in "placing himself at the centre" of James's philosophic vision? I believe on the whole he does, though one might want to shoot round the bullseye from slightly different angles. The book is indeed a stroll, not to say a ramble, in leisurely belletristic style that takes some getting used to after modern briskness. It allows space for digressions about aspects of the modern world that Barzun dislikes and for an exasperating number of footnotes that continually interrupt the argument with low-toned asides (James, in the age of the footnote style of writing, has far fewer and has the excuse that much of his work was transcribed from lectures). Barzun also eschews any hint of Freudian reductionism: James to him was an angel of a man, possessor of every virtue and springing from a family of unequalled harmony.

But in his loving enthusiasm (James has been a lifelong inspiration, he says) Barzun does bring out much of the essence of this venerated yet underestimated writer. Whether or not he is right in saying that everyone should read *The Principles of Psychology* right through at least once (there is some stodgy German experimentalism in it, which no nation capable of being bored, said James, could have produced), Barzun's stroll through it is always enlightening. Probably the non-psychologist reader would get more out of the shortened version - the "Journey" - in particular the chapters on "Habit", "The Stream of Consciousness", "The Self", "Attention", "The Sense of Time", and "Will". *The Principles* founded a discipline, but its sound philosophical base, its anti-scientism and clear conception of where psychology ends and psychology begins, were all too rapidly discarded by James's successors

along with difficult topics such as will and belief. It is the first and last textbook with the courage to cover every reasonably coverable aspect of human mentality within one framework, before the body of psychology was dismembered for ever. And it concludes with a summary also ignored today: that "this is no science, only the hope of a science", a subject into which "the waters of metaphysical criticism leak at every joint".

A central achievement of *The Principles* Barzun sees as its presentation of consciousness: as something not composed of the sum of many little idea-chunks (lemon-taste plus sugar-taste = lemonade taste) but as a constantly moving flux on which the beam of attention plays now here, now there. "My present field of consciousness is a centre surrounded by a fringe that shades insensibly into a subconscious more. . . . Our full self is the whole



field, with all those indefinitely radiating subconscious possibilities of increase that we can only feel without conceiving, and can hardly begin to analyze." The feeling of thunder, for instance, is also a "feeling of silence as just gone". And many elements in the flux are not substantive so much as transitive: "We ought to say a feeling of *and*, and a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue*, or a feeling of *cold*." Even the gaps in the thought-stream have a distinct existence: "When I vainly try to recall the name of Spalding, my consciousness is far removed from what it is when I vainly try to recall the name of Bowles." And how can a thought-chunk be made out of an *intention* to say something? - yet each such intention has its separate content and feel. It is "the reinstatement of the vague and inarticulate to its proper place in our mental life" that James prides himself on.

The experienter of the stream shapes it into patterns, and eventually into an individual world-view, by the direction of his beam of attention: consciousness is thus a *function*, not an entity. And to make experience manageable, he classifies, sorts, arranges, and comes up with concepts. But for James concepts are the enemy, rather than the ideal, the absolutes, the aspired-to; concepts stifle the particularity and plurality of things as they really occur, and must be given rough handling rather than reverence. Nor can they, representatives of rationality, ever be separated from feelings without artificiality: feeling and knowing go together. The contrast, as James emphasizes, is between the abstractionist and the man who lives "in the light of the world's concrete fullness".

James's Pragmatism, his particular way of assessing truth, is therefore not, says Barzun, a philosophy but a description of how the mind in practice ascertains truth: truth is "simply a collective game for verification processes", or, more briefly, it is "what works". Clearly this won't strictly do (though Barzun does not pursue the obvious difficulties): if a culture finds it satisfactory to believe that it brings the sun up each morning by singing a chant, a very special version of "truth" is in operation. That witches should be burnt alive was a workable moral truth for some time. But enough has been written by philosophers about the defects of James's version of Pragmatism when subjected to logical criteria. What Barzun stresses is how psychological is James's philosophy

(and vice versa); pragmatic verification is not a philosophical preserve but something we do all the time, as M. Jourdain spoke prose; it is an expanded definition of how we think. A proposition is not to be considered so much true as truthful, a kind of useful map. And no single theory should be taken for absolute reality; we need to take what we find useful from as many as possible. As with James's expansion of the notion of consciousness, *include* is the principle; better a flaw in logic than the exclusion of any inconvenient part of the multiplicity of experience. When, in his chapter on "The Self" in *The Principles*, he talks of the narrow people who "intrench their Me", or retract it, as opposed to those who "proceed by the entirely opposite way of expansion and inclusion", we know whose side he is on. He holds out for a version of truth that includes religion as well as mathematics, poetry as well as logic.

Barzun also explores James's attitude to the influence that hypnotic and hysterical phenomena were having on current notions of mentality. Men such as Flournoy, Richet, Bleuler, Kraft-Ebbing, Binet, Charcot, and Myers were grappling with the idea that the self is not a simple, single unit but a grouping that can split and become dissociated. By the early 1890s James was already writing about the healing that can come from reconnecting isolated parts of the mind to awareness. In 1909 he heard Freud lecture at Clark University and wrote of the Viennese school that "They can't fail to throw light on human nature, but I confess [Freud] made on me personally the impression of a man obsessed with a fixed idea". James's unconscious differs from Freud's in not being sharply demarcated from the conscious, in not being fixed during childhood, and in including within it collective and transcendent aspects. And of course his lifelong interest in psychological research, about which he demonstrated his exceptional capacity to keep an open mind without anxiety, was linked with his awareness of the great expanse of mental power existing beyond consciousness.

The fact that the fringe of feeling beyond conscious awareness may be more extraordinary than we realize is the key to James's cautiously positive conclusion to *The Varieties of Religious Experience* - as Barzun says, a wonderful and scholarly book and in a sense a third volume to *The Principles*, demonstrating again his extraordinary gift of open-mindedness. He understands and describes well the "religion of healthy-mindedness", the belief that defying evil makes all things well, and acknowledges its efficacy (he was aware of the successes of Christian Science and other currently fashionable "mind-cures"). But in his chapter on "The Sick Soul" that describes its opposite, the pain of the twice-born as opposed to the optimism of the once-born, it is clear that his sympathy is for the more inclusive view. The method of averting one's attention from evil, and living simply in the light of good is splendid as long as it will work. It will work with many persons; it will work far more generally than most of us are ready to suppose; and within the sphere of its successful operation there is nothing to be said against it as a religious solution. But . . . there is no doubt that healthy-mindedness is inadequate as a philosophical doctrine, because the evil facts which it refuses positively to account for are a genuine portion of reality; and they may after all be the best key to life's significance, and possibly the only openers of

our eyes to the deepest levels of truth.

James's conclusion to the final question raised by *The Varieties of Religious Experience* - are they "true"? - turns back to the unconscious. This appears to extend to a "wider world of being", to "transmundane energies", to "something larger than oneself, perhaps only a larger and more godlike self"; and prayer - the pragmatic test of the argument - seems to work. So James ends *The Varieties* with a cautious assent to a veracity underlying the multi-fold experience he has described.

In this way he came to terms with the religious legacy left by his father - a kind of acceptance of it on his own very individual terms. Where Barzun is inadequate is in his smooth acceptance of the James family and the James upbringing at its face value - liberated and loving and harmonious. It would be more realistic to see William James's whole progress as a coming to terms with a strange family ethos. It was surely no simple group that produced two geniuses and three dramatic casualties. To understand both the elder brothers we need to know more about Henry Senior's Swedenborgianism, but unfortunately not much can be learnt from the almost unreadable pages of the latter's writings, edited with filial piety by William. The essence of it for Henry Senior seems to have been the relief of dropping a burden of guilt and anxiety on to the shoulders of an all-wise and all-conquering Providence. Brought up in an atmosphere of crushing Calvinism, he underwent, like William, an experience of horrific breakdown in youth. His solution was Swedenborgianism, which told him that the individual could live without an ever-present fear of sin and damnation. "I learned", he wrote to Robertson James, "to separate myself, as an entirely disinterested party, from the great conflict raging in my bosom, and leave it to God's perfect providence." The guilt, the conflict, the unsolved questions were, as it were, neatly parcelled up and passed on entire to the next generation. We may guess that the James family posed what we now call a double-bind for the children: they were to have absolute freedom - so long as they were not unhappy, guilty, hostile, or ill. But currents of guilt and unhappiness ran powerfully through the family.

Henry Junior (as he was known until his father's death) worked out his own solution. William stayed in the homeland and went through ten years of neurasthenia and vague illness culminating in his own "vastation". The description of it is well known; how suddenly at twilight "there fell upon me without any warning, just as if it came out of the darkness, a horrible fear of my own existence"; how "after this the universe was changed for me altogether" and "I awoke morning after morning with a horrible dread at the pit of my stomach, and with a sense of the insecurity of life that I never knew before, and that I have never felt since". Though he was brought up in perfect liberty, the ostensible cause of his years of despair was an inability to believe in free will. James had no such ready solution available to him as his father had; he was of the late, not the mid-century. But in his way he had a kind of slow conversion; he read himself into a belief in free will, found congenial work at last, and managed to start a long and tortuous courtship that ended happily. It would not be much of an exaggeration to say that everything original about James is connected with his personal confrontation with nihilism: his compassionate, large-mindedness, his ability to draw lucidly on introspection, his personal philosophy of decision and experiment. The evil which healthy-mindedness refuses to account for is indeed in his case "the best key to life's significance" and "the only openers of our eyes to the deepest levels of truth". And it makes parts of *The Principles*, decidedly unlike any other psychology textbook, an undogmatic guide on how to live. The chapter on "Will" is a deeply personal document as well as an extraordinary inquiry into a neglected subject; the chapter on "The Self" a therapy for anyone baffled by the confrontation with identity. "The seeker of his truest, strongest, deepest self must review the list carefully, and pick out the one on which to stake his salvation. All other selves thereupon become unreal, but the fortunes of this self are real." This is pragmatic, lived truth, not theory.

## Everything going wrong

Bill Buford

RAYMOND CARVER  
Cathedral  
228pp. Collins. £8.95.  
0002237908

Raymond Carver's characters have names like Fat Linda, Marge, Tiny, Mac, Captain Nick and Spud. They don't make things. They can't type and never seem to read. They're without a skill in a marketplace that increasingly assumes that you have to have one. They deliver boxes or serve cocktails. They wax floors, sweep chimneys or go door-to-door selling vitamins. Not making much money, they work long hours - night shifts, split shifts, early morning shifts, two jobs at once: picking tulips, perhaps, during the day, and cleaning the inside of a drive-in restaurant in the evening. They dream a lot, but their dreams are not all that different from the day-time television they watch so much. They dream of love and so fall in love easily - because of the colour of someone's hair or the tight fit of someone else's designer-jeans. They dream of escape, fantasizing about Arizona until they actually get

## Plaited lives

Joanna Motion

GAIL GODWIN  
Mr Bedford and the Muses  
228pp. Heinemann. £7.95.  
042479518  
ROSE TREMAIN  
The Colonel's Daughter  
174pp. Hamish Hamilton. £8.95.  
04111182X

The collection *Mr Bedford and the Muses* opens with a 100-page novella and closes with an "Author's Note". In between are five short stories. Only one of these does not centre on a writer, usually female, investigating a plaited version of her work and her life. "Author's Note" certainly isn't the odd one out. There, Gail Godwin claims for herself an image already familiar from the preceding stories: the writer, in an upstairs room, rattling noise out of a typewriter to convince other people - decorators, friends, landlords, fans - that worthwhile work is in progress. She doesn't need to protest so much. Her latest collection is finer and more focused than her baggy novel *A Mother and Two Daughters*.

The recurring, writing persona has its most naked expression in "A Cultural Exchange": "Once I was twenty-one and terrified I would not get the most out of life. I wanted to marry, to travel, to be a writer." It occurs elsewhere in subtler forms: as the wonderfully enraged campus columnist in "The Angry Year" trying to prove her non-conformity by spitting about sorority fashion shows; in "Amanuensis" as the blocked author whose mutually deceiving relationship with a young admirer tricks her back into activity. As we see so much of her, it's just as well that this figure is likeable, truthful and often funny.

She finds her most productive shape in "Mr Bedford". The American diarist in this novella revisits her younger self, an eager student of the world, temporarily lodged in London in the 1960s. She takes her cast of boarding-house inmates through the rituals orchestrated by their enigmatic landlords until, from a mixture of acute observation made at the time and retrospective wisdom, she has halfway puzzled them all out. Gail Godwin's preferred method of patching memory with invention works well here. She is strong in the period (Algerian wine, and "we drove around London taking what we were preoccupied ourselves"), discerning with her characters and at her best when most self-bronzing.

The novella length suits her. In other sharp but flatter pieces, such as "A Father's Pleasure" where the musician father's indulgence of his son extends even to handing over his second wife, Godwin collapses the end of the story almost bustling the characters off when they reach the edge of the area marked out for their attention. "Paul and Liane remained mar-

ried and lived healthy, ordinary lives. They had no children." Ironically, the lesson of many of the stories is that these characters should lay off the self-reflecting and get in some living. Rose Tremain's collection *The Colonel's Daughter* is stranger and more varied. In her funniest story "My Love Affair With James I" an actor tries to make sense of disillusionment between recordings of voiceovers for Tiggo cat food. He gets guidance from the Eric Neasdale "Make Money by Writing" course: "Unless you actually are a blind philatelist, do not try to write about this." Rose Tremain doesn't see why philately for the blind should be off limits, nor why "what you know" shouldn't be attached through an imaginative reach for the unfamiliar as much as by a survey of the habitual.

That attitude comes as no surprise after the terrain covered in her three novels: in this collection she goes further. Five of the short stories are first-person narratives and Tremain moves convincingly from the voice of the post-termination sixteen-year-old to that of the rampant old buffer, denied a funfair on his ancestral acres. Look like a stick-in-the-mud, I know that, but I was the one who thought up the lion pit. It's the council who won't play. Curry said point, nought, naught fiddle-faddle, but what do we get in the end? Vetoes.

These near-monologues give the author the structure to achieve some of her most impressive writing. "My Wife Is a White Russian", a study in marital collision, is both moving and admirably concentrated. The invalid industrialist has angular consonants ("Toomin Valley Nickel Consortium") but a yearning heart, while his smooth-haired wife feels sympathy only for *Don Giovanni* and *Giselle*. The cool narrative tone of "Wedding Night" takes on extra force because the speaker is a twin, and the core of the story the "I" is really "we". The boys' progress from unreasoning for their mother's death to a shared lurch into adulthood via sex (how else? - this is Paris) on the night of their father's remarriage. Thereafter they are separate.

The most ambitious venture here is the title story. In "The Colonel's Daughter" a young feminist translates her convictions from polemic into practice by burgling her parents' home, sporting-gun in hand. From a hawk's view, poised above the action, the author traces the connections between victims and the people who link themselves into the pattern by their attempts at rescue.

Tremain's prose is lush and more inventive than Godwin's, and while she is sometimes tempted into a quasi-fantasy that loses touch with its function, the risks she takes (and her boorish for that) are generally rewarded. Even her incidental characters - the other tart or someone's obnoxious ten-year-old son - are tantalizingly realized. She invests these stories with a reassuring sense of having richness to spare, with some left unexplored for how, promising much for the future.

and effect: most seem to offer estrangement as a world-view, as if in everyone there is an inbuilt mental tendency to be hurt and alienated. In "Where I'm Calling From", the narrator, deserted by his wife and then his girlfriend, attends a retreat for alcoholics. Here he falls in love with a new friend's wife, entirely on the basis of the description of her - only to be rejected by both the new friend and the wife when she finally visits. In "Vitamins", the narrator and his wife's best friend endeavour to have an affair. At a jazz-club on their first night out, they encounter a black who, just back from the war, displays an ear he cut off a Vietnamese and who then, in virtually the same drunken breath, propositions the narrator's new girlfriend: the couple leave and, filled with a sudden self-loathing, are unable to touch each other. In "The Bridge", a horse-trainer who has squandered his money gambling, arrives at a hotel in Arizona. Unemployed, unengaged and uninterested, he spends his time by himself, until one day he succeeds in joining a drunken party around the swimming pool. At the urgings of his new friends, Holis dives off a nearby building into the swimming pool below: he misses and - a visual analogue to both the story's and Carver's preoccupations - splits open his forehead, literally destroyed by the company he sought.

Carver's people are adrift among the perishes and the utensils and the junk food of the consumer society. His representations of them, however, never become explicitly political, even though many of his concerns are politically suggestive. These stories are, instead, persistently passive; they are constantly telling us that this is simply the way the world is. How can you be expected to explain or place blame when you can't figure out what's hap-

## Debates with demons

Alan Hollinghurst

SVEN DELBLANC  
Speranza  
Translated by Paul Britten Austin  
153pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95.  
0 436 12680 X

Sven Delblanc's novel *Speranza* takes the form of a journal kept by a young libertarian Swedish nobleman who, while travelling to the West Indies on the *Clotho*, is struck by a gale and rescued, with his tutor and his blackamoor, by the *Speranza*. The date is 1794, and the young Count, who has thrilled from a distance to the French Revolution and formed his own cell, the Brothers of Liberty, in the provincial town of Purbus, is naturally put out to find that the freight of the *Speranza* consists entirely of slaves. Things get worse and worse, and the journal, which opens with lofty rhetorical bombast about liberty, describes in both matter and manner the moral regression of the Count, who ends up butchering and raping the cargo, his prose style deteriorating the while towards its final inarticulacy.

*Speranza* is, in a way, a novel of ideas, but one without any ideas in it. Its main concern, indeed, is to demonstrate the perpetual resistance of mankind to ideas - especially philanthropic ones. There is a debate, in the middle, between the idealistic but already doubting Count and the vicious, sophisticated Jesuit who travels with them; but this is a black parody of a real exchange of ideas, and offers a corrupt and casual gloss on the themes of lust and greed which, artfully latent from the start, grow in the end to be all-consuming. Sade replaces Rousseau as the prophet of the Revolution, and another ship of fools is launched. But it is not only the too palpable design of the fable and its relished exegesis - "a floating Europe, a Laputa of philanthropy and good intentions" - which pall. The writing is miserably thin; each journal-entry being prefaced by interminable posturings designed perhaps to indicate the impact of reality on the artificial sensibility of its writer. If it is Delblanc's intention to suggest the mental poverty and windbaggy of ignorant idealists he has been cruelly successful. Fictional confessions of a third-rate sensitive mind provide their own kind of challenge to an author, but it is nothing to the demands they make on the reader. Sometimes, it must be

pening to your life? This detachment - we do nothing, it is done for us - touches everything, including the language. All of Carver's stories are told in the first person and all are narrated in a voice that is dry, unsurprised, insistently spare: the sentences seem to proceed from a state of linguistic shock. Amid events so wildly unknowable, Carver's language seems to be striving to exercise the control, however limited and fragile, achieved by simple, unadorned syntax. The narration is in fact so understated - so stripped of judgment and discrimination - that it verges constantly on irony without ever fully succumbing to it. In "Preservation", the narrator's husband succeeds in reading one passage from a book over and over again: it describes how a man has been stuck in a peat bog for 2,000 years. Elsewhere, the narrator recalls that her father saved money by buying goods at auction-houses; his last purchase was a car, so cheap he was killed when the carbon monoxide leaked through the floorboards: the car continued to run until the petrol-tank was emptied. Even the central image of the "The Bridge" is very close to the ludicrous: a swimming pool is, after all, a pretty large target to miss. Carver's low-rent, bargain tales are situated between tragedy and comedy: the absurdities are recalled by an author with too much compassion to laugh.

There is no question that this collection, Carver's third, is an impressive and original achievement. There are two or three minor exceptions: "A Small, Good Thing" and "Fever", two of the longer narratives, are not written with Carver's characteristic detachment, and sink into melodrama. But those apart, *Cathedral* ought to establish his reputation as one of the most original new voices in fiction to appear from the United States for many years.

said, the numbingly repetitious fusian - all seasoned old sea-dogs, miserable jackanapes, tattered-damnation ruffians, veritable demons every man-jack of them - is winningly studded with unidiomatic phrases (the revenge, presumably, of the translator): "an angel of enchantment, with blue eyes full of wonder, a smashing refined little kid . . .", "for christ-sakes, my young sir, do nothing!" There are, too, Conradian portents ("The implacable smell of death") and the prose sometimes bulges into varicose agglomerations of metaphor: "The sea darkens from blue to black. Over it sways the great highway of the moon's golden ducats, glittering like tinsel." But by and large *Speranza* is more successful than it intends as a parable of disappointment.

JANEKSTRÖM  
The Ancestral Precipice  
221pp. Macmillan. £7.50.  
0333 354052

Miss Charlotte Lethander summons her relatives to the old family mansion in the Swedish countryside to celebrate her nineteenth birthday. No-one refuses the invitation, since she is known to be exceedingly rich, but tensions run high between the three branches of the family, and blood soon flows. It's pleasing to find the old traditional type of detective story (complete with family tree) alive and well and living in Scandinavia; there's a fine traditional stiffness in narration and character portrayal, and an equally fine, exceedingly ingenious method of murder.

DOROTHY DUNNETT  
Dolly and the Bird of Paradise  
316pp. Michael Joseph. £8.95.  
07181 22798

Rita is a dwarf-sized Scottish make-up artist with hockey player's legs. Called in to exercise her skill on the famous Natalie Sheridan, she is unwillingly drawn into the world of Dorothy Dunnett's painter-cum-intelligence agent hero, the saturnine Johnstone Johnson, owner of the yacht *Dolly*. Oodles of local colour - Madeira, Martinique, Barbados and St Lucia - and a bright, jackdaw-like narrative style might compensate for an impenetrable and implausible plot. Or might not.

T. J. Binyon



# Mortal visions

D.J. Enright

ALDOUS HUXLEY  
*Brave New World and Nineteen Eighty-Four*  
 Revised  
 386pp. Chatto and Windus/The Hogarth Press.  
 £9.95.  
 07011 27694

Regarding *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in the year of Our Lord/Our Ford/Big Brother 1984, we can have little doubt as to which is the more enjoyable novel - or which is the more earnest. They both begin on a sinister note: but Huxley then modulates into humour, even farce, into his characteristic high (if mixed) spirits, while Orwell progresses from the mildly squalid to the much worse. Huxley is plainly relishing the business of "bokoanovskification", the mass production of identical "twins" from a single egg, cosily glossed as "Podsnap's Technique", and such basic propositions as that the secret of happiness lies in liking what you have to do: children who are destined to work on rockets in space are so manipulated in embryo that "they're only truly happy when they're standing on their heads". Orwell tells much the same story, but in a tone that precludes the least hint of a smile.

"Cleanliness is next to godliness", "Ford's in his fivver, all's well in the world", the simple inversion of the past whereby to pat a girl on the behind shows how conventional and trustworthy a man is and promiscuity is respectable while any sign of chastity calls for remedial treatment - this is the Huxley of the bright young novels of the 1920s. "Very difficult", he said of *Brave New World* while writing it: "I have hardly enough imagination to deal with such a subject." But wit, his popularizing gifts and agility in espousing opposing points of view sufficed instead. Along, one supposes, with the rather too obvious pleasure he takes in sexual matters and manners.

Parallels with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are plainly to be expected and plain to see. So are the divergences. The Solidarity Service starts like a revivalist meeting or a spiritualist séance ("Feel how the Greater Being comes!"), turns into a conga, and ends in an "Orgy-Porgy, Ford and fun". The Two Minutes Hate involves the hurling of heavy objects at the Enemy's picture on the telescreen, an orgy of self-abasement before Big Brother ("My Saviour!"), and ends with a rhythmical chanting in which "one seemed to hear the stamping of naked feet and the throbbing of tom-toms". Huxley's world has eradicated love and constancy, Orwell's has wiped out eroticism and pleasure. But even the nasty things in Huxley - the pre-hypnopædic "famous British Museum Massacre. Two thousand culture fans gassed with dichlorethyl sulphide" - are presented in comic guise. The citizens get a kick out of seeing the Savage flagellate himself, where the other citizens are disappointed if they miss seeing the hanging of Eurasian prisoners. Huxley has great fun with his jingles, but "Under the spreading chestnut tree/I sold you and you sold me" is the most desolating thing in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Heartlessness in Huxley has as its counterpart hopelessness in Orwell.

Huxley fantasizes, lightly and shrewdly, where Orwell is telling the truth - he had the benefit of Nazism and Stalinism - but telling more than the truth. He builds up the hate and fear basic to his vision of the future until, through his abhorrence of a world in which two and two are sometimes five and sometimes three, he makes them all-powerful, irresistible. Like Huxley's embryos, his characters are predestined - to defeat and to selling one another.

When Huxley looks about, not in the least afraid of the obvious (for instance, the Director's confrontation with his - shameful world - son, John the Savage), Orwell is grim, relentless, undistracted: no "sexophones" (how Twentieth-century!) or "Arch-Community-Spangster of Canterbury" for him. There is nothing in his novel as corny - well, as undistilled - as the account of John the Savage's miserable childhood with his derelict mother, whose "conventional" free-and-easiness is predictably seen by the savages as gross stupidity. (Though the idea of having John educate himself on Shakespeare's *Complete Works* is a bright one, providing powerfully emotive, from

inology for his connotations as well as a title.) And there is nothing in *Brave New World* as solid and as truly prophetic, in kind if not in degree, as Orwell's appendix on Newspeak. Given what has gone before, Orwell's ending - "He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother" - is alas the only possible one, whereas Huxley's gives the impression that the author was running to catch the post. If, instead of hanging himself in an Othello-like fit of shame, the Savage had sweated it out, he could have got himself sent (like his friends) to one of the islands reserved for heretics - Samoa or the Marquesas or, should somewhere more bracing be preferred, the Falklands. Banishment is better than vaporization.

Just as the Voice of Reason, the Voice of Good Feeling, is distinctly pleasanter than the Voice of Big Brother. Some of the elements of his brave new world engage Huxley's interest quite unsatirically: the fact, for instance, that there is no tragedy, no "high art", simply because people get what they want and don't want what they can't get; that there is no neurosis because there are no strong feelings, "no dignity of emotions" as Sybille Bedford (whose view of the book is darker than mine) puts it in her introduction; that consequently there is no war, where in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* war is permanent. Huxley may even seem half in love with this world, to judge from his civilized equivalent of Big Brother, the Controller Mustapha Mond (cf, as nomenclature, "O'Brien"), who is a philosopher (not at least a torturer), indeed the best thinker, or the only one, in the book. Mond knows temptation, he also knows, rather well, the works of Shakespeare and of other "pornographic" writers; and we incline to think it better that these should simply be banned rather than, as is predicted in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, suffer translation and transformation into the contrary of what they used to mean. Mond points out that there is no need in their society for nobility or heroism, themselves symptoms of political inefficiency, thus echoing a line from Brecht's *Galileo*. When the Savage wants God, poetry, danger, freedom, sin - in other words, the right to be unhappy - Mond tells him that these are part of a package deal including "the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat... the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind". The best people in the novel may not lack conviction but they are deficient in argument, and all the Savage, noble, heroic, can reply is "I claim them all." Mustapha Mond shrugs his shoulders: "You're welcome."

When Huxley wrote *Brave New World* Revised twenty-seven years later, in 1958, he too had had the benefit of Nazism and Stalinism, and other menaces man-made or natural. He found himself "a good deal less optimistic" than when he was writing the novel, but still considered the odds "more in favour of something like *Brave New World* than of something like *Nineteen Eighty-Four*". In the context of 1948, the latter "seemed dreadfully convincing. But tyrants, after all, are mortal and circumstances change."

His afterthoughts are intelligent and well-informed - on overpopulation, the price paid for medical and technological advances, the need for order and organization and yet their dehumanizing effects, propaganda both political and commercial, brainwashing, and drugs - or "chemical persuasion" ranging from port to Miltown. Yet the fable, *Brave New World*, is more convincing on its own terms than the think-piece, *Brave New World Revised*, which is also vulnerable, and more so, to mortal factors and changing circumstances. As Sybille Bedford hints, our tyrannies and menaces are at least pluralistic. Neither Huxley nor Orwell allows sufficiently for human unpredictability, whether heroism or eugenicness, for while Wordsworth fell back on as he worried over the evil effects arising from a thirst for "frantic novels" and "picky and unworld German Tragedies", "I should be oppressed with not dishonourable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it, which are equally inherent and indestructible."

# From the outpost

S. S. Praver

GREGOR VON REZZORI  
*Memoirs of an Anti-Semite*  
 281pp. Pan Books: Picador. £7.95 (paperback, £2.50).  
 0330 283251

Gregor von Rezzori has been around a long time. As a radio journalist, a purveyor of film-scripts and a series of satirical handbooks on post-war West German society (with delightful illustrations by himself), as a writer of chatty, allusive, autobiographically centred prose-narratives with a distinctive tone, he has gathered a devoted following in German-speaking countries without, as yet, figuring largely in academic literary history and criticism. His chief claim to fame has been, until now, the invention of a Balkan region called "Maghrebinien" - an imaginary part of the old Austro-Hungarian empire which he celebrated, Münchhausen fashion, in a series of radio features that issued, in 1953, in a volume entitled *Maghrebinische Geschichten*. He followed this up with what he himself subtitled a "Kolportageroman" - a novel from the undergrowth of literature, fit to be sold by pedlars rather than respectable bookshops - entitled *Oedipus siegt bei Stalingrad*, which has been widely admired (and sold in many bookshops) as a sociologically and linguistically accurate evocation of Berlin under National Socialism. Another novel, *Ein Hermelin in Tschernopol*, won Rezzori the Fontane Prize in 1959, and appeared in English as *The Hussar* without making a noticeable splash. It is only with *Memoirs of an Anti-Semite* that his voice has become readily audible in the English-speaking world. Described as "A Novel in Five Stories", it has been widely read in the US, and its depiction of what the title of the first story calls "skushno" - a Slavonic variety of *ennui* and *Weltschmerz* - has exerted a powerful appeal well beyond the borders of Maghrebinien.

Rezzori comes from the same geographical area as the most highly admired poet of post-war Germany, Paul Celan: the region of Rumania which centres on Czernowitz and is generally known as the Bukovina. But though they were both German writers of Rumanian origin, hailing from one of the linguistic outposts of the late Austro-Hungarian Empire, they belonged to radically different worlds. Paul Antsel, who changed his name to Celan, was part of a Jewish community doomed to be hunted down by the Nazis and their allies, while Rezzori was born into a declining aristocracy that dreamt of a return to imperial splendours in which the Jews would revert to their medieval status. It is this opposition which is highlighted by the title *Memoirs of an Anti-Semite*.

The five interlinked stories that make up this book combine autobiographical fact with admitted fantasizing. Four of them are told in the first person by a narrator whose biography and vital dates fit those of Rezzori (born 1914) like a glove; the last has at its centre a consciousness described in the third person which is clearly continuous with that of the earlier narrator. The stories follow one another chronologically. The first, "Skushno", tells of events in and around Czernowitz in the late 1920s; the second, "Youth", is set in the Bucharest of 1933; the third, "In Löwyngers' Rooming House", is again set in Bucharest and runs from 1933 to 1937 while including an important flashback to 1927 and an even more important flash-forward to 1957; the fourth, "Troth", is set in the Vienna of 1938, with flashbacks to 1932-4 and a flash-forward to 1947; the fifth, "Pravda", traces the life and reminiscences of a grey-haired *declassé* swell working for *chiclé* in the Rome of the 1960s, mulling over the past and imagining the future.

Well, go on with your biography. Jump a decade forward, or backward if you please. Example at random: if that possibility of yourself, you always come across someone you would be embarrassed (or outright ashamed) to identify with; someone you'd refuse to frequent if you weren't forced to live with him, because he happens to be yourself - yes, but there's always another dimension, another possibility.

That last phrase defines one of the principal virtues of this book. Its interplay of past and present, selves, of possibility and actuality, brings about a constellation of more or less

ironic juxtapositions which governs the whole tone of the work and determines at least one of the central themes that bind the five stories together. That theme is emphasized by the very title of the final story, whose protagonist remembers how he tried to defend his right to imaginative remoulding of his past selves against the passion for undeviating devotion to ascertainable fact shown by the second of his three successive wives: *pravda* is Russian for "truth", but it is also the title of a newspaper not noted for its devotion to an undistorted picture of reality. "Troth" is a similarly revealing and ironic title. It represents the German *Treue*, chivalric loyalty, keeping faith with oneself and one's history which is also the history of one's estate or modern conditions. However pervasive the ironies are, though, the ideals that shaped notions of truth and loyalty are not cynically devalued. The reader is shown the central character's many lapses and betrayals as well as the grotesque situations into which adherence to inherited values may lead; but he is never asked to abandon ethical valuation and judgment. Indeed, the rumination on possible actions a possible self might have taken in given circumstances usefully "place" the actual self's meannesses, petty cruelties and betrayals in similar situations.

Another virtue of the book is the vividness, the solidity of specification, with which it evokes its world. Rezzori has a marvellous eye for landscapes and townscapes. By skilful selection of detail he places his readers in the Bukovina countryside and in specific districts of Budapest or Vienna, among their sights and sounds and smells. He peoples these landscapes and townscapes with groups and individuals among whom we come to move as though we too were inhabiting this strange corner of a vanished Empire, this meeting-place and collision-point of Orient and Occident. Rezzori's world is filled with things, too, with furnishings and appurtenances that reveal the character of those who own or use them. Things, people and landscapes, both in themselves and in constellation, frequently take on symbolic dimensions. These dimensions are sometimes made a little too explicit; we may occasionally be irritated by the narrator's garrulity. But this is an indelible part of the distinctive narrative voice of the novel.

Most prominent among the novel's many ironies and paradoxes is that indicated by its title. Antisemitism is shown to be endemic in the corner of the world in which the story is set; its many social varieties are chronicled, and its murderous conclusions are not only made explicit by references to Germany under the Nazis and depositions of Vienna after the Anschluss, but are also suggested by the protagonist's own acts of violence directed against a Jewish friend and a Jewish lover. Many varieties of Judeophobia are depicted in the narrator's ambience; he chronicles a multitude of precepts, examples and experiences that propel him into antisemitism; and the depiction of his inner life includes murderous fantasies, imaginary pogroms, which the Nazis were to make a horrible reality. Yet the narrator shows himself constantly drawn to the Jews he encounters in his flight from his own doomed land-owning class left behind by a decaying Empire; the most delightful of all the characters to whom he introduces us, a modern reincarnation of Goethe's Phyllis called Minka, is Jewish; he even marries a Jewish wife, with whose passion for the Absolute he finds he cannot live, but who bears him a son in whom he recognizes "myself as a Jew"; and the fate he suffers as a *declassé* drifter is constantly shown to be akin to that of the very Jews whom he has been taught to despise. Racists attracted by Rezzori's title will find little comfort in this tale of an "anti-semitic manqué", a Gentile avatar of the Wandering Jew.

Three of the stories contained in this volume are translated from the German; the two others, however, have been written in English by this multilingual and cosmopolitan Rumanian. Occasionally one can detect German words or phrases beneath Rezzori's English: "brav" beneath "brave", perhaps, "gesunkene Fahne" beneath "sunk flag"; but his English is flexible and serviceable, and at least as idiomatic as that of his American translator.

# Keeping the numbers down

Robert Irwin

B. F. MUSALLAM  
*Sex and Society in Islam: Birth control before the nineteenth century*  
 176pp. Cambridge University Press. £17.50.  
 0521 248744

SIXTY HORSES WEDGED IN A CHIMNEY. As with Beachcomber's sensational headline, the text to fit the title *Sex and Society in Islam* has not turned up yet: B. F. Musallam's restrictive subtitle "Birth control before the nineteenth century" appears only on the title-page. Still, it must be conceded that this pioneering study draws on a wide range of sources and has potentially important implications for the social history of the Near East. Medieval Arab texts on Islamic theology and law are cited to show that birth control was commonly regarded by such authorities as permissible and even, in certain circumstances, desirable. Beyond that, Dr Musallam argues from medical and popular literature of the period that some form of birth control - most commonly coitus interruptus - was widely used, particularly in Egypt and Syria in the late Middle Ages. If he is right, then we cannot assume that demographic trends in the Near East were dictated by a "natural fertility rate",

hitherto assumed to be common to the pre-modern Third World.

Arab writing on the subject was both extensive and remarkably frank and this has allowed Musallam to be more confident in his speculations than historians who have attempted to study birth control in pre-modern Europe. However his treatment of his sources does not always inspire confidence. To take as an example the source most likely to be familiar to a Western readership, *The Perfumed Garden* of Shaykh Nafzawi: in a section on "The means of control in erotica", Musallam tells us that Nafzawi lived in sixteenth-century Tunis. In fact he lived and wrote in the early fifteenth century. Musallam goes on to tell us that it "is available in a good English translation by Sir Richard Burton"; in fact Burton's translation was not from any Arabic original, but rather from the French of a pirated and emended version of an earlier French translation from an unknown Arabic manuscript. Musallam avoids reliance on Burton's "good" translation (wisely we may think) and prefers to use an Arabic text printed in Tunis. However, our troubles are not over once we have got back to the "original" Arabic, for the Tunis text also relies on an unidentified manuscript, but Nafzawi's *al-Rawd al-A'ir* survives in a number of manuscripts. Some of these are heavily abridged, some have clearly been added to by other later hands and

# Pernicious stimulants

Alethea Hayter

TERRY M. PARSSINEN  
*Secret Passions, Secret Remedies: Narcotic Drugs in British Society 1820-1930*  
 243pp. Manchester University Press. £21.  
 071909529

The connection between public opinion - even under-informed and over-excited public opinion - and reforming legislation is the nexus of *Secret Passions, Secret Remedies*, a vigorous but sober study better summed up in its sub-title than in its unnecessarily sensational title. The most original sections of the book describe how public concern about drug addiction - whipped up by descriptions by journalists, and novelists like Sax Rohmer, of white girls lured into opium dens by sinister Chinamen - reached its peak of excitement in the first twenty years of this century, just when effective government action to regulate narcotic use was at last getting under way, but when in cold fact there were comparatively few drug addicts in Britain: a few Chinese seamen who smoked opium among themselves, a few elderly morphia addicts who had got hooked as a result of medical prescriptions many years earlier, a few Bright Young Things experimenting with cocaine. It was the last who captured the headlines, but the problem of the "recreational" drug user was by then a minor one (the highest annual figure for prosecutions under the Dangerous Drugs Act in the 1920s was 300 for the whole of Britain).

What then can be deduced about the power of public opinion to promote reform? Is reforming legislation, as this study might lead one to think, more likely to be the end-product of slow-moving bureaucratic process by dedicated doctors and civil servants than by a belated wave of popular indignation? The Dangerous Drugs Act of 1920, which finally achieved control of the import and export, sale and prescription of opium, morphia, heroin and cocaine, was doggedly set going by a Home Office official, Sir Malcolm Delevingne, and as far back as 1868 it had been a Medical Officer to the Privy Council, Sir John Simon, who was responsible for the first attempt at legal regulation of dangerous drugs.

Terry M. Parssinen suggests that up to about 1870, public opinion regarded drug addiction with tolerance; he dates the opening of literary attacks on it from the publication of *Edwin Drood*, and government concern from the Poisons and Pharmacy Act of 1868. His thorough-going enquiries into medical and pharmacological journals and government records have not quite been matched by his literary researches, or he would have given more

weight to such evidence as the attacks on De Quincey for corrupting his readers, the shocked comments of Cottle and Southey on Coleridge's addiction, Carlyle's loathing of all opiates, Harriet Martineau's reference to opium as "pernicious stimulant" and George Eliot's as "the demon Opium". The evil was not generally tolerated, but it was regarded - like many other contemporary evils - as not amenable to legislation.

*Secret Passions, Secret Remedies* has useful sections on changes in medical and self-medication practices and in the status of doctors and chemists, on the growth of the patent medicine trade, on the discovery and over-use of morphia by doctors, on the growing theory that drug addiction is a disease, not a crime, but these and other aspects of British drug addiction during the nineteenth century have already been well surveyed recently in Virginia Berridge's *Opium and the People*. Professor Parssinen's most valuable contribution is his analysis of the 1900-30 period, particularly his startling theory that when the opium trade from India to China was checked, it was replaced by a huge increase in the export of British-manufactured morphia to China (smuggled via Japan) in the second decade of this century. This hypothesis is based on convincing manufacturing and export records, and is not just what he himself calls "the grating moralism of the Americans" about British guilt over opium trading to China. This study is impartial and objective about the relative efficacy of British and American methods of controlling drug abuse, which are compared in a thoughtful "Afterword".

The book's clear and forceful style, free from jargon, should make it accessible to non-specialist readers; and students of the 1920s, now again so fashionable a period, would be fascinated by some of the real-life figures of the drug scene then - by Brilliant Chiné, who dealt impartially in cocaine, heroin, opium and flash, used only young girls as his couriers, and was finally convicted on evidence positively planted by the police; by Britannia Yettiram, known as "Gipsy", who passed cocaine to her customers in a pub on Shaftesbury Avenue; by the smugglers who brought in cocaine hidden in German sausages, opera-hats and even models of the Cenotaph; by actresses and dance-instructors with "bobbed golden hair" who succumbed to lethal overdoses of drugs after a Victory ball or a quarrel with a lover. By the 1930s this scene, never a wide one, had almost vanished in real life, though it still reappeared in novels like Dorothy Sayers's *Murder Must Advertise* as late as 1933. A comparison between drug addiction in life and in literature in Britain in the 1900s might tell a very different story.

some versions were produced as late as the nineteenth century. The literature of Arab erotica is an under-researched field, abounding in composite works and pseudepigrapha. (Did the venerable religious scholar of the fifteenth century, Suyuti, really write the works of pornography ascribed to him, as Musallam seems to believe?) It may be dangerous to rely on such sources for the details of medieval sexual practices.

But the precise wording used by medical and popular erotic sources must be important when it comes to assessing how effective the recommended contraceptive techniques were likely to be. My own examination of the relevant chapter in the Tunis text of Nafzawi suggests that there are real difficulties in attempting the sort of tabulation of contraceptive techniques that Musallam offers us. Too often Nafzawi and his contemporaries leave it profoundly unclear whether they are talking about contraceptive plugs or potions, whether the recommended recipe is to be tried before, during or after intercourse, and whether they are intended to sterilize or block the sperm, or alternatively kill a foetus. Recipes which would be moderately effective in one context become purely magical in another.

However, many of these problems will doubtless be resolved in a forthcoming translation of some of the key texts promised by the author. In any case since Musallam argues, surely rightly, that coitus interruptus was the technique most commonly used to limit births, such problems hardly affect the argument in his important final chapter, "Population and Middle Eastern history". After the demographic catastrophe of the Black Death in the fourteenth century the return to former population levels was slow, both in Europe and in Egypt, but it seems to have taken centuries longer in Egypt than in Europe. Why was this? Some historians have blamed Egypt's troubles on foreign invaders, nomads and bandits. Others have claimed that political and economic mismanagement by the military élite led to a flight

from the land and endemic famine. More recently it has been argued, by Michael Dols, that the Near East became the victim of recurrent visitations of pneumonic plague - a much deadlier visitor than the bubonic plagues that Europe became accustomed to in the later Middle Ages. Now Musallam points out that Muslim jurists gave unconditional sanction to coitus interruptus when times were hard and goes on to argue that the deliberate limitation of families was probably widespread in Mamluk Egypt and may well have been a factor in preventing the population returning to its former level.

It is not unlikely that some members of the urban, military and mercantile élites took advantage of the religio-legal sanction and acted in the way suggested, but that this could have been a common response in agricultural communities in a period of high infant mortality and acute labour shortage seems much less likely. A pre-Black Death population in Egypt which is unknown, a subsequent decline whose scale and duration can only be guessed at, and the interaction on the latter of a sexual practice whose popularity is hypothetical - all this may seem excessively speculative; but it is plainly worth speculating about.

There is more of interest in *Sex and Society in Islam* than can be discussed here. In many respects it is a revisionist work. It argues that Islam enabled rather than dictated family choices. It casts doubt on the alleged decline of Arab medicine in the later Middle Ages. It demonstrates the interdependence of genres of Arabic literature which superficially might seem to have been quite separate. Lovers of *curiosa* will be interested to learn what to do with ear-wax from a mule, foam from the mouth of a rutting camel and fumigations of elephant dung. Some of the concoctions seem potentially lethal and prompt the reflection that a high death rate among women attempting contraception may have been a factor in keeping Islamic populations down.

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# The conservative reaction

James Joll

HANS DIETER HELBIG (Editor)  
Walther Rathenau-Maximilian Harden:  
Briefwechsel 1897-1920  
1077pp. Munich: Müller/Heidelberg:  
Schneider. DM158.  
379530505

Walther Rathenau and Maximilian Harden are among the most interesting figures of twentieth-century Germany. Their complex characters and their troubled relationship are not only of psychological interest but also illustrate many of the social tensions of the Wilhelmine Empire and the Weimar Republic. Rathenau was a very successful industrialist and financier, heir to the AEG, the great electrical firm built up by his father Emil, and at the same time a man who saw himself as an original social thinker and philosopher. Harden was the most successful and controversial journalist in Germany, whose weekly paper *Die Zukunft*, in addition to printing work by many of the most famous writers in Europe, provided continuous bitter criticism, from a neo-conservative viewpoint, of the Kaiser and the way in which Germany was being run. Both Rathenau and Harden came from Jewish backgrounds (a world discussed in detail in the admirable collection of articles in the 1983 *Yearbook* of the Leo Baeck Institute). Both reacted by attempting to identify, in some respects at least, with the old Prussian ruling class.

Their friendship began in 1897 when Rathenau's attack on his fellow Jews, "Höre, Israel!" was published in *Die Zukunft*, although his antisemitism or "Jewish self-hatred" never became as hysterical or as vulgar as Harden's. For a few years each behaved as if the other was his closest friend. Harden gave Rathenau the opportunity of being taken seriously as a writer. Rathenau gave Harden the entrée into the world of banking and industry, as well as some valuable tips on the stock market, and his friendship helped to give some sort of social stability to a man who had run away from an unhappy home as a boy, changed his name and joined a travelling theatre group before becoming a freelance journalist.

The Rathenau-Harden correspondence illustrates the interaction between journalism, business and politics, and the complex and ambivalent relationship of both men to the society in which they made their fortunes and reputations. One is left with the impression that the social structure of Wilhelmine Germany was more flexible than is often supposed, even if both men to some extent remained outsiders, partly by choice. Thus, for example, one of Harden's brothers (who changed their name from Witkowski to Witting) became Oberbürgermeister of Posen and a member of the Prussian Diet, while another became a senior magistrate and a captain in the Landwehr, so that they were more successfully integrated into the Prussian establishment than Harden, who, for all his links with the agrarians and his declared admiration of old Prussian values, had served a prison sentence for *lese-majesté*. These letters give us many insights into some of the political causes célèbres of pre-war Germany, especially of course the Eulenburg affair, which showed Harden at his most ruthless and cynical in his role as what would now be called an investigative journalist, whose methods went further than the more cautious and gentlemanly Rathenau could stomach. The shadow on their relationship might have grown deeper, then, if Rathenau had not at that point left on an official mission to the German colonies in Africa.

The decision to publish the correspondence between Rathenau and Harden in a separate volume in the ambitious edition of Rathenau's collected works is therefore justified not only by the enthusiasm of the editor, Hans Dieter Helbig, who has contributed a 200-page introduction largely devoted to Harden, but also by the intrinsic interest and drama of the letters themselves. The publication of the complete edition is proceeding slowly and in what seems a random order: the first volume to appear, nearly seven years ago, was Volume I on the series, and we now have Volume Six. This involves some editorial discretion as to what yet unpublished volumes, especially Volume

One, *Schriften aus der Wilhelminischen Zeit*, and Five, which will contain the rest of Rathenau's correspondence.

The letters were written between January 1897 and the final breach between Rathenau and Harden in April 1920. There are still gaps, however. Rathenau's papers were confiscated by the Gestapo when his sister emigrated in 1939 and seem to have mostly disappeared. What we have here are certified typewritten copies of his letters deposited in the Harden archives when the respective families agreed to return their side of the correspondence after Harden's death in 1927. The editor suspects that both Rathenau's mother and his friend Frau Lili Deutsch (whose own papers were lost when she was drowned on her way to America in 1940) may have removed some letters, although he finds no evidence of systematic weeding. Harden's papers were kept by his daughter, who emigrated to Israel before returning to Europe, where she died last year, and must have suffered some losses in the vicissitudes of exile, but the Harden *Nachlass* in the Federal German archives at Coblenz is clearly a major source for the intellectual and political history of twentieth-century Germany.

His introduction provides a series of studies which attempt to situate the two men in relation to the society of Wilhelmine Germany while applying a little amateur psychoanalysis to their early lives. Some of this is familiar enough – the revolt of sons, and especially rich men's sons and even more especially Jewish rich men's sons against their fathers, or the growth of new anti-liberal ideologies, for instance – but in his detailed account of Harden's development Helbig has written an important piece of intellectual history. While we have all been inclined to ascribe much that happened in Germany in the 1890s to the influence of Nietzsche, Helbig shows precisely how in Harden's case his ideas and language derived directly from Nietzsche. He also shows (and this helps

to explain much about Wilhelmine Germany since the same transmutation of values occurs in other people) how Harden moved from a vaguely liberal Bohemianism to a neo-conservative position which involved him in an unquestioning assumption of the reactionary values of his first patron, Bismarck, and of the old Prussian ruling class, but which, partly through his friendship with Rathenau and the contacts this led to, he later succeeded in combining with an equal admiration for the great industrial and financial magnates.

If the introduction has less to tell us that is new about Rathenau, this is partly because the editor has already written a long introduction to the previous volume containing Rathenau's theoretical works, and partly because, while he writes of the influence on Rathenau of other thinkers, Gobineau or Simmel, for example, it is difficult to show any direct connection or even indeed whether the self-centred and over-worked Rathenau ever actually read them. Helbig feels (such is the climate of contemporary German historical writing) that he has to justify the interest in these two remarkable men by references to the *hermeneutische Grundproblematik* of a biographical study, and he uses much sociological jargon, but in fact, especially in the very full notes to the letters, he shows a perceptive understanding of their individual idiosyncrasies.

There are still puzzles: we still cannot be sure whether Rathenau helped Harden with cash as well as advice in the latter's often reckless speculating on the stock exchange or in the financial difficulties caused by the bankruptcy of *Die Zukunft*'s printers. We still would like to know more about the quarrel between the two men in the winter of 1912-13, when Rathenau's *amitié amoureuse* with Lili Deutsch, the wife of a colleague and, it has been suggested, rival for the top job in the AEG, was involved in the struggle for power within the firm. The quarrel actually led to Rathenau's challenging

Harden to a duel, which Harden refused. (And before we use this as an example of how far the feudal and military values of the old Prussian aristocracy had affected the behaviour of the German Jewish bourgeoisie, we must remember that in Paris two years earlier Léon Blum, a Jew assimilated into a very different milieu, had actually fought a duel.)

Relations between the two men were never to be the same again, although they were patched up during the First World War. By 1920, however, the breach was final, partly because Harden could not bear to see his former literary protégé moving towards the centre of political power (Rathenau joined the government in 1921), while he himself was striking increasingly inconsistent political attitudes and seemed already a man of the Wilhelmine past. Helbig excuses the vicious attack which Harden published after Rathenau's murder in 1922, and which some of us have seen as a crowning example of his ruthless unpleasantness, as being the result of the "self-hatred" which he regards as the key to Harden's character. Hatred of oneself may explain hatred of others; it hardly excuses it. Yet the destinies of both men were curiously similar. Nine days after Rathenau's murder by blond nationalists of the kind he admired, Harden was attacked by a band of thugs belonging to the same gang and received injuries from which he never wholly recovered, although he lived for another five years. Conservative and national sympathies had protected neither man; and for all their efforts at assimilation and, especially in Harden's case, outspoken antisemitism, they had remained labelled as Jewish, a label which cost them their lives. And, more ironically still, the lawyers defending Harden's attackers in court were also Jewish, while the judge, who showed more sympathy for them than for Harden, was the son of a rabbi. One wonders sadly what fate awaited them over the next twenty years.

many individuals' admiration for Nietzsche turned into indifference or hostility once they became, during the war years especially, swept along by familiar Wilhelmine enthusiasms. Max Maurenbrecher, for instance, began as an unorthodox socialist who saw Nietzsche as "flesh of our flesh", but ended up in 1917 forming the transparently named *Vaterlandspartei* – by which time "Nietzsche was no longer a noticeable factor in his thinking". Pertinent, too, is the attention drawn to the hostility expressed towards Nietzsche by the Social Darwinists of the time, whose philosophy deserves to be regarded, if any does, as the official ideology of middle-class, imperialist Germany.

In the light of modern Nietzschean interpretation, as well as his own blunt statements – "It is even part of my ambition to count as the despiser of the Germans *par excellence*" – one wonders how Nietzsche could have had any positive influence on the imperialists and their ilk, let alone have inspired anything like the 1916 reference to "The Euro-Nietzschean War. Read the Devil in order to fight him better." Thomas's explanation is that several of Nietzsche's distinctive claims about individuals lent themselves to perverse translation into ones about social/political wholes. Thus the *Bund für Mutterschutz* could translate his demand for the "breeding" of a new kind of individual into the eugenic call for a purer, superior race. The author might have mentioned other factors here, not least the machinations of Nietzsche's antisemitic sister, Elizabeth, and the Nietzsche Archival. Many of his most explicit statements against the State and *Deutschum*, including the one I have quoted, were contained in his last works, like *Ecce Homo*, whose publication she delayed until well into the 1900s. Still, a mystery remains. Heinrich Mann, reminiscing on the days "when we were young and Nietzsche was alive", recalls the "attitude of personal independence" – "He would sooner be an anarchist than a submissive citizen of the Reich" – which Nietzsche inspired in him and his peers. How, one asks, could anyone not be so inspired?

The book should, in my view, have been a longer one. There is no mention, for example, of Nietzsche's importance, even responsibility, for Stefan George's circle: a group whose decidedly Germanic and aristocratic ideals scarcely qualify it as one of the those "libertarian" movements that Thomas regards as the main beneficiaries of Nietzsche's legacy. He might argue that this influence falls under the heading of "literary" rather than "social" or "political": but against this, it should be noted that, with the exception of the Subversion Debate, the book recounts Nietzsche's impact upon ideas, rather than upon day-to-day practical issues. The George Kreis, spawning political biographies and Utopian social proposals, would surely come within the book's compass.

Thomas assumes that his readers will have a fair knowledge of Nietzsche's ideas, and he is not primarily concerned with interpretation: though he makes clear his general attitude (that the "libertarians" (even the socialists among them) had more justification for their enthusiasm than any enemies of individualism could have had. Anarchists can genuinely find more succour in Nietzsche than friends of the State. At only two points do I want to quarrel with the interpretations hinted at. When Thomas writes that "Balance, harmony, and restraint . . . are . . . by implication, condemned (by Nietzsche)", he is overlooking the philosopher's unending admiration for Goethe as the embodiment of the harmonious man, as well as his unflagging call for self-restraint. Second, in the discussion of Nietzsche's reception among educationists, the author exaggerates his "child-centredness", when he writes that "Children must be allowed to develop in accordance with their inner nature" sounds "rather like Nietzsche". In fact, with his emphasis on hard discipline at school and his rejection of the notion of an "inner self", Nietzsche was as opposed to this horticultural concept of education as to its main rivals, "old maidish" scholarship and "bread-winning" vocationalism.

Not the least value of the book is that it puts us in contact with an age when philosophy could still direct the course of political and social debate, when metaphysics rather than money could provide the criteria. Could an author of the next century write more than a pamphlet on Russell's or Sartre's influence on politics and society between 1970 and 1990?

# The triumph of comedy

David Scott Kastan

NORTHROP FRYE

*The Myth of Deliverance: Reflections on Shakespeare's Problem Comedies*  
90pp. Brighton: Harvester. £12.95 (paperback, £3.95).  
0710805811  
*The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism*  
174pp. Brighton: Harvester. £12.95 (paperback, £4.95).  
0710806566  
ELEANOR COOK, CHAVIVA HOSEK, JAY MACPHERSON, PATRICIA PARKER and JULIAN PATRICK (Editors)  
*Centre and Labyrinth: Essays in Honour of Northrop Frye*  
346pp. University of Toronto Press. £25.50.  
0802024963

By his own account, Northrop Frye is an "Odyssey" critic, attracted more to comedy than to tragedy. From his first published essay, Frye reveals his preference, which rests ultimately on his belief that the authority of literature derives, as he says in *The Myth of Deliverance*, "from its integrity of structure rather than from its fidelity as a mirror of its time". Works of literature exist for Frye not as representations of reality but as realizations of desire. This is not to say, he would rush to add, that literature has no ethical aim or function, but to recognize that it satisfies its social responsibilities precisely as the imagination liberates text and readers from what he terms "the bondage of history".

Comedy and romance are the literary modes that most obviously testify to the triumph of the imagination, and Frye unashamedly delights in their willingness to assert the pleasure principle over reality. Comedy, he has said in *A Natural Perspective*, presents "a world where reality is created by human desire, as the arts are". The triumph of comedy is, then, not merely an example but the symbol of the imagination's capability to form and transform, to create the envelope of culture that protects us from and consoles us for the chaos of reality.

*The Myth of Deliverance* is the most recent of Frye's efforts to explore the activity of the imagination and its relation to human experience. Based on the Tamblin Lectures that he gave at the University of Western Ontario in 1981, the book seeks to locate Shakespeare's problem comedies firmly within the logic of romantic comedy that Frye himself has developed. Each of the three essays defines a stage of the myth of deliverance that is part of that comic logic (or rather each describes an arc of it, since the myth reveals itself to be cyclic). The first two essays develop the pattern of reversal and recognition that is at the heart of Frye's poetics of comedy. *Measure for Measure* is the test case for the first phase, and Frye attends carefully to its rhythms, both dramatic and poetic. With the Duke's abrupt switch to prose from verse at III i 15, Shakespeare switches the generic direction of the play, changing its notes to comic: "Passion and accusation are reversed into the fusion of love and wisdom that makes humanity redeemable." The second essay, centring on *All's Well That Ends Well*, extends the comic logic. Recognition is added to reversal so that what is reversed is not merely action but "energy": lust turns to love as "the current of self-wasting energy" reverses itself "into a reversed and creative life". The third essay focuses on *Troilus and Cressida*, and even Frye must bow before its corrosive ironies. He admits that it "does not illustrate the myth of deliverance". None the less it serves it. The play's disillusionment marks the low point of the myth's course and signals the inevitable upturn: "Being disillusioned with a world like that is the starting point of a genuine myth of deliverance."

A quick summary cannot do justice to the subtlety of Frye's argument, but its broad outline is revealing. In the end is his beginning: his argument enacts the very comic pattern he would define. *The Myth of Deliverance* becomes its own myth of deliverance, reversing the critical fortunes of the problem plays to permit the recognition of their secure place within Frye's comic "mythos". *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure* become, in his words, "fairly typical comedies". Both are "simply romantic comedies where the chief

magical device is the bed trick instead of enchanted forests or identical twins".

But that "simply" seems facetious, for the bed trick differs not merely in degree but in kind from the devices by which romantic comedy responds to desire. "Enchanted forests or identical twins" extravagantly witness to Shakespeare's manipulation of the plot, freeing us to delight in it. But the bed trick is the characters' manipulation, not the playwright's, and it is too unresponsive to the desires of others to permit our delight. Certainly Frye is correct to argue that we cannot differentiate the problem comedies from romantic comedy on the basis that they are somehow more realistic. Sensibly he observes that the bed trick is no more credible than the activities in the wood outside Athens. But if, as Frye argues, comedy is an imaginative model of desire, we can differentiate the two because each is modelled on a different conception of desire – one constructive, the very principle of civilization, and the other assertive, a parody if not a denial of the first. Shakespeare's subordination of event to desire produces comedy; Helena's, something else – and problem comedies need not a bad name for it.

*The Myth of Deliverance* displays, then, Frye's own constructive desire. He identifies and harmonizes individual works of literature to clarify their place within, as they establish the nature of, the poetics of comedy that is his subject. He has always been vulnerable to a charge that he is insensitive to the particularities of specific texts, especially as their variations may point not to the necessary individuation between the texts that determine a paradigm but to a "schism", as Frank Kermode calls it, within it. None the less, if the book demonstrates Frye's greater loyalty to the myth rather than to the various illustrations of it, it reveals the power of his visionary understanding of literature.

Frye's commitments become explicit in *The Critical Path*. Published first in 1971 and now reissued, the book is part of his continuous "rewriting" of his central myth. "A writer has increasingly less that is radically new to say", he engagingly admits in the preface, "unless he has previously been wrong." Still, some defensiveness is apparent as he seeks to answer his critics' claim that his notion of literature as a coherent structure effectively removes it from any vital relation with the external world.

The path Frye travels winds through a lush cultural landscape that includes Sidney and Shelley, Milton and Marx; Renaissance humanism and the Free Speech Movement. He explores these and other cultural phenomena (revealing on the way that fictional and non-fictional discourse are alike conceived of as projections of the imagination) to discover a context for criticism that will acknowledge both the structural principles of literature and the external historical process to which literature responds. This critical path approaches the literature dialectically, in terms of what Frye sees as opposing tendencies of Western culture: a conservative "myth of concern" and a liberal "myth of freedom". The myth of concern is the voice of the community, anxious to

preserve continuity and coherence. The myth of freedom, on the other hand, makes articulate the countervailing influence of individuality that resists the authoritarian, homogenizing pressures of concern. Concern and freedom always exist together in some necessary and uneasy tension. They occupy "the whole of the same universe", Frye writes, "and it is no good trying to set up boundary stones". It is both impossible and undesirable, for concern without freedom becomes repressive; freedom without concern becomes anarchic. The imagination, as we might expect, emerges as the hero of the piece, mediating between the claims of freedom and concern and producing "glimpses of a third order of experience . . . a world that may not exist but completes existence, the world of the definitive experience that poetry urges us to have but which we never quite get".

The argument is an attractive expression of a romantic theory of imagination that seeks not to evade the world but to appropriate it; humanizing by its projections the inhospitable and inhuman environment in which we live. The theoretical activity of the thirteen years since the book first appeared, however, may have left us suspicious of the authority claimed by and for these projections. In other ways, however, the book's concerns are more urgent than ever. "Civilization is the same man's burden", Frye writes, and he fully realizes that "the lunatic obsessiveness of a foreign policy that keeps on making aggressive gestures at a time when any serious war would wipe out the human race carries the situation beyond the point of normal loyalties".

Frye's remarkable loyalties are to the human imagination, and the essays in *Centre and Labyrinth*, presented to him on his seventieth birthday, explore, extend and ultimately celebrate them. Several essays are explicitly about Frye's work, the best being Paul Ricoeur's analysis of his "order of paradigms". Ricoeur tests the heart of Frye's system, and if he is finally unable to follow Frye to the "still centre of the order of words", he recognizes the power of his postulate. Other essays, like Helen Vendler's on Keats's "Ode to Autumn", James Nohrenberg's on *Paradise Regained*, and David Staines's on Hugh of St Victor's historical imagination, use Frye's work as a point of departure, testifying to its continued centrality and potency. Still others acknowledge no specific debt but their critical concerns and methods indirectly pay homage to Frye's interests and influence: notably Eleanor Cook's account of Wallace Stevens and John Freccero's essay on the poetics of the *Purgatorio*. However the volume's final two essays are its most interesting: Harold Bloom's joyfully revisionist reading of Freud (inspired by Freud's own less joyful self-revision), which by examining the idea of transference tests Freud's claim that "psychoanalytic treatment is founded on truthfulness", and Angus Fletcher's modest but richly suggestive essay on the labyrinth as an image of the process by which the human mind and heart approach the truth. The two serve as a satisfying coda to a collection that is unusual among presentation volumes in that it genuinely honours its recipient.

# Postmodernist death-throes

Lachlan Mackinnon

IHAB HASSAN and SALLY HASSAN (Editors)  
*Innovation/Revolution: New Perspectives on the Humanities*  
365pp. University of Wisconsin Press. \$27.50.  
029093905

"Postmodernism", Malcolm Bradbury observes in this collection of essays, "has in some ways become a critic's term without ever quite being an artistic movement." Bradbury proposes that postmodernisms, like modernisms, need to be told apart, as A.O. Lovejoy argued of romanticisms; but the tone of this sentence could be an artistic movement. Bradbury proposes that postmodernisms, like modernisms, rather than an artistic stance.

Certainly the atmosphere of such contributions as Herbert Blau's "The Remission of Play" leads one to think so. Here, an astonishing variety of avant-garde activities is subsumed by a deconstructive rhetoric of perplexing generality. The air of crisis such pieces stir up is frenetically artificial, and suggests that the real trouble is nostalgia for the golden age of modernism proper. Many of these writers seem to want to attend at the birth of something radically new, but some have already been waiting rather a long time. Paul Noack thinks we live in an age of chronic, irresolvable crisis; Leslie Fiedler is still convinced that the novel has died and that Saul Bellow is a post-humous aberration; "reactionary in essence if not quite perverse", he concludes that

it is not mythological post-modernist France . . . which knuckles the imagination of scholars and aspiring writers in countries still trying to make it cultural in the late industrial world; but out, to them, mythological America. From that Promised Land of triumphant vulgarity, they eagerly import . . . along with other mass-produced products of a leveling technology . . . the classic bourgeois novel, which they have not heard (or cannot afford) to believe is dead.

Freaks like Márquez and Rushdie are ignored in this uselessly kicking down of the ladder on which one might try to "make it culturally". The sleight of mind by which one spits on one's own culture and jeers at those to whom it represents a barely imaginable liberty is the same as that which assimilates "scholars and aspiring writers". The lack of respect for creativity, which has rarely listened to critical prohibitions, is a lack of respect for the individual and an overweening self-importance.

On the one hand, then, Ihab and Sally Hassan have collected as repugnantly modish a group of contributors as can be expected. On the other, though, they have attracted some sensible and thoughtful accounts of present dilemmas. Bradbury's is one: another is Wayne C. Booth's "Renewing the Medium of Renewal", which sees a crisis of belief in the possibility of novelty. Everything has been done, it seems, to dismantle any starting-point. Booth argues that the pursuit of certainty has meant a Pyrrhonian abolition of meaningful choice, and that the contemporary mind needs to find its freedom in humility. This unsurprising approach is luminous beside some of the frivolity offered elsewhere.

What is depressingly evident in this book is a deep, humourless hostility to art on the fashionable side and a defeated withdrawal into curatorship on the other. Postmodernism is left looking like the mere backwash the word suggests, an epoch of unrestrained literary theory and complete unreality. The most prolonged contact with the world we actually inhabit is a detailed description of sadomasochistic high jinks in New York, apt entertainment for critics who devote their time to prolonging the illusory death-throes of their subject. Jean-François Lyotard calls on us at the end of the book to "wage a war on totality"; his mocking good sense unwittingly shrivels what has preceded it and returns us to the open future we had all along.

# W.H.Smith Annual Literary Award

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W.H.SMITH



# Remainders

Eric Korn

WHEREAS divers persons, including my editor, a reader and the family systems analyst have expressed the opinion (being persons proper to express an opinion) that my prose is hard to follow and I share their difficulty; and whereas it is the first duty of a communications person to communicate, as it is that of a media person to meditate and a columnist to what d'ye callum; and notwithstanding that poetry can communicate before it is understood, as T. Eliot stated and must have wished he hadn't, thereby opening the lid of Pandora's stable door onto a veritable Augean mares' nest; and considering the fact that those who live by the word are in danger of perishing cold isn't it, and those who waive the rules may be not waiving but drowning; and inasmuch as a major source of obscurity is parenthetical proliferation or bracket-busting; NOW THEREFORE I resolve that my thought-patterns as far as any pattern is discernible shall be elucidated, clarified like ghee and made transparently perspicuous by the immediate adoption of an alphanumeric polychotomously ramifying deweydecimal paragraph-indexing index, thus:

1. (More about rotten foreign poetry) or 1.1. (More about foreign rotten poetry)

1.1. "In its youth, I confess, this column thought sausages were funny", wrote Nathaniel Gubbins of the *Sunday Express*, a 1940s humorist (see 1.1.1.1.) now overdue for critical re-evaluation but not, hopefully (see 1.1.2.), for republication, which might prove as embarrassing as listening to Tommy Handley of ITMA whose indefatigable merriment helped to steady us and lighten our hearts through the dark days of et cetera.

1.1.1. Eg "For saying dot, Hans to der concentration camp haff gone"; "No, it's VI (see 1.1.1.1.) that can't eat eggs and Flo (1.1.1.2.) that can't eat fish."

1.1.1.1. What does VI stand for, or how do you say it: Is it Vigh for Violet and Vee for (duhduhduhduh) Victoria? And if so what happened when Lady Violet Bonham-Carter was first introduced to Mrs Harold Nicolson?

1.1.1.2. I think it was Leonard Woolf, at the publication party for *The Journey Not the Arrival Matters*, who inadvertently lent Robert Louis Stevenson to the Cévennes. Stevenson, who had booked a fortnight's holiday at Benidorm, was mournfully anticipating the ineffectuality of the Guardia at Alicante. "Cheer up", said his interlocutor, "Air Castle's (see 1.1.2.1.) in-flight service is a by-word and its stewardesses miracles of Iberian grace." The arrival lounge will be the only bad part of the trip. The journey itself, hopefully, will be much better. "Yes", mused poor old R.L.S., misunderstanding as usual; "to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive."

1.1.2.1. Castle's in Spain! Castle's in the air!" was their advertising slogan; "I'll ne man-que que style" was proposed but rejected.

1.1.2.2. There was a similar misunderstanding later when Stevenson told us he'd hired a horse for the trip; and Ralph Waldo Emerson suggested he'd be better off on his ass.

1.2. The whole question of the innately funny, the *ans ridibundum* or *lachryf*, remains a subject for intense academic speculation and experimental effort. Cerebroelectric truis have been undertaken, with sets of separated monozygotic twins, subjected under control conditions to carefully calibrated measures (see 1.2.1.) of culturally neutral (ladders going through windows, bombs) or culturally detourmied (beautiful downtown Burbank, Cyril Smith, the Empu totem) sure-fire hilarifiers.

1.2.1. Humour is measured on a logarithmic scale, one-fifth being the intensity that will raise the angle of the pericent's lips by 45° at standard temperature and pressure. For everyday purposes the decibel, which is one-tenth the perceived funniness (see 1.2.2.) is a more useful unit. Other relevant measures are the unit of humorous duration: the millijest-second, ovuk, and its multiples and submultiples such as the kiloyuk and millyuk; the unit of source peculiarity or humorous flux (one microflux produces a level of one yuk at a distance of one hundred metres); the unit of easiness in telling jokes (yoken), the yuk (Klein's Tables of Shear Angles in Pressured Composites

used for standardizing, the third edition having less than 1 nanowag/page, though the fourth edition has a wry footnote after the Acknowledgments); the gaw, or inverse wag, which measures the resistance of an audience to a three second I-decibest wil-dose (this is the International Standard Gag, not yet officially adopted).

1.2.2. Because of the logarithmic relationship between source and sensation (the Weber-Fechner or Psychophysical Law), a joke must be one hundred times as funny to produce ten times the laughter, smile or other observable response in the jokee.

1.3. There exists not even the beginning of a consensus as to whether the joke originates in the pericent, the pericentoid or in their interaction. The search for the absolute joke, the joke which is funny when there is no one to see it, is a piece of Plutonic whimsy to the Hilario-postdeconstructurilists, whose *chahiers (Deconnerie; Ecriture Sourire/Fourire)* deserve to be better known.

1.4. J. B. Fyer, leader of the English school of empirical or stand-up humorologists, writes: "For every person at least one topic produces uncontrollable amusement. But there is no way of knowing if this topic is determined by the genes, in early childhood, or an instant before you read this."

1.5. In my case it seems to be Albania.

1.5.1. Look, I'm sorry about this. I'm as opposed to racial generalizations as the next man, and if I had my way all racial jokes would be about Etruscans or Elamites.

1.5.1.1. There would be no theoretical objection to using both, in the general format "One fine day/rainy evening/moon-festival an Etruscan and an Elamite met at the baths/market/laundrette."

1.5.1.1.1. For multipartite jokes, the categories of North/South/East/West Elamite (or Etruscan) are recommended; these can be subdivided as required, viz North-East Etruscan, South-West Elamite etc.

1.5.1.1.1.1. It is not recommended that this paradigm be used for joke-situations involving more than twenty-eight protagonists.

1.5.1.1.1.1.a. I seem to be trapped in a regressive index.

1.5.2. Obviously there is nothing risible about any language *per se*, even one which owes its grammar to the well-known Albanian Primer of Naum Vegilharxhi.

1.5.2.1. What a boon he must be to Albanian Scrabble-players! Especially if his followers were denounced for crypto-vegilharxhization (triple letter points for q, x and z).

1.6. I have been getting a lot of childish amusement out of Koço Bihiku's useful *Outline of Albanian Literature*, which was put out by the Naim Frashëri (see 1.6.1.) Publishing House, Tirana, 1964. It is translated by Ali Cungu into sober but unidiomatic English, curiously reminiscent of the flat, fluent, confident and totally foreign enunciation of the English newreaders on Radio Tirana (see 1.6.2.).

1.6.1. "Naim Frashëri spent the early days of his life in the naturally beautiful environment of his home village, an environment that left deep, unobliterated traces in the tender heart of the poet to be."

1.6.2. I can just hear one of them uttering the words: "Bardhi's work is permeated throughout with the author's love of country and national pride. Basing his arguments on undeniable historical facts and presenting them with the consummate skill of an able dialectician who has full command of language and wit, F. Bardhi invalidated his opponent's theses (see 1.6.2.1.) and called them historically unfounded."

1.6.2.1. His opponent, needless to say, was a Bosnian Bishop who doubted Scanderbeg's Albanian ancestry.

1.7. The main theme of Albanian poetry before the establishment of socialism seems to be commiserative, thus:

1.7.1. "Now Albania how are you / Like a tree felled out of view" ("O Moj Shqipni" by Pashko Vaso) or

1.7.2.

Never has Albania been  
Topsy-turvy in such mess;  
Never have Albanians seen  
Ugly deeds of wickedness.

1.7.3.

And when the firing ceases  
And banners have been brought home  
Albania chopped in pieces  
Will flourish and be handsome.

1.8. Sang Naim Frashëri:

Poor Old Europe at that time  
Plunged it was in great despair  
But it started up to climb  
When Rousseau came and Voltaire.

1.8.1. That was before the foundation of the League of Prizren.

1.9. Ndre Mjeda's patriotic lyrics became more and more outspoken and actual:

He hence you vile perfidious dreg!  
Albania has discarded you:  
To Asia fly and pull the leg  
Of those you like so much to woo.

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Oliver M. Ashford was editor of the *World Meteorological Organization Bulletin* from 1952 to 1975.

Reynar Banham's most recent book is *Scenes in America Deserta*, 1983.

Chaim Berman's most recent novel, *The House of Women*, was published last year.

Malcolm Bowie is the author of *Mallarmé and the Art of Being Difficult*, 1978.

W. M. Bray is a Reader in Latin American Archaeology in the University of London.

David E. Cooper is Reader in Philosophy at the University of Surrey.

J. Mordaunt Crook's most recent book, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream*, was published in 1981.

D. J. Enright's collection of essays, *A Mania for Sentences*, was published last year.

D. W. Harding is Abercromby Professor of Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh.

Alethea Hayter is the author of *Optum* and *The Romantic Imagination*, 1968.

Robert Irwin's *The Mamluk Sultanate 1250-1517* will appear later this year.

James Joll's books include *Gramsci*, 1977.

David Scott Kastan is the author of *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time*, 1981.

E. G. Knox is Director of the Health Services Research Centre at the University of Birmingham.

John Marenbon's *Early Medieval Philosophy: An Introduction* was published last year.

Paula Newson's edition of the Cornish mystery play, *The Creation of the World*, was published last year.

Julia O'Faolain's collection of stories, *Daughters of Passion*, was published last February.

D. D. R. Owen's books include *The Legend of Roland: A pageant of the middle ages*, 1973.

Brian Pippard is the author of *The Physics of Vibration*: Volume I, 1978, and Volume II, 1982.

S. S. Praver's most recent book, *Helpe's Jewish Comedy*, was published last year.

Simon Rae's poems appeared in *Faber's Poetry Introduction* 5, 1982.

Colin A. Roman is editor of the *Journal of the British Astronomical Association*.

David Rossand is chairman of the Department of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University.

William Scammell's collection of poems, *A Second Life*, was published in 1982.

Hilary Spurling's *Secrets of a Woman's Heart: The later life of J. Compton-Burnett 1920-1969* will be published later this year.

Sarah Waterlow is the author of *Passage and Possibility: A study of Aristotle's modal concepts*, 1982.

Phyllis Willmott is co-author, with Susan Mayre, of *Families at the Centre*, which was published last year.

# Does the brain have a mind of its own?

Are love, fear, sorrow or memory simply electro-chemical reactions? Or is there an extra, spiritual dimension to the billions of neurons fizzling away inside our skulls?

On Wednesday at 10.45pm on Channel 4, two of the world's leading thinkers stretch their brains around this age-old problem.

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4

# Letters

T. S. Eliot

Sir, - I can assure L. C. Knights (Letters, February 10) that access to the Eliot canon is indeed difficult.

At the Royal Court Theatre, the Artistic Director Max Stafford-Clark and I were informed in a reply dated February 5, 1980, and signed by the Trustee, that we could have no access to material by or about Vivienne Haigh Wood Eliot.

The many hundreds of letters and documents of Eliot stored at Princeton University Library, and known as the Emily Hale Bequest, are sequestered until the year 2020. All such copyright, of course, remains in the possession of the Eliot Estate which, in turn, has made no decision to exercise this right.

The letters of John Hayward, and his Eliot papers, are held at King's College, Cambridge, under a stipulation that unpublished material should not be made available until the year 2000.

In recent times, the death of Hope Mirrieles placed on the market a considerable bequest of documents which shed light on the making of *Four Quartets*. The Mirrieles Trustees include his D. Edmunds, Margaret Ellis and John Graham Saunders. Access to this material is mysteriously difficult.

An author, Mr Humphrey Carpenter, is in possession of diaries and papers which were the Estate of the late Mary Trevelyan. I made frequent appeals to Carpenter for access to the Trevelyan papers and was turned down. The last exchange I had with Carpenter ended somewhat abruptly. Carpenter said, "This is an extremely sensitive area. Mrs Valerie Eliot will not stand for it. I have to abide by what she says."

I feel somewhat taken aback by the hysteria which greeted my play *Tom and Viv*: especially when it came from people who had not accorded me the courtesy of going to see the show. Sir Stephen Spender flew into the printed air with the announcement that "this play is implausible, unpleasant, and of absolutely no substance". I have to note L. C. Knights' insinuation in your columns that my play is "prudent delight" in an "abounding gutter", and further that "I do not think I shall feel drawn to see the play." And to pile hypocrisy on to obstructiveness, Humphrey Carpenter quoted extracts from Mary Trevelyan's diaries in a BBC broadcast this week to illustrate my failure to present Eliot in a proper light. It is my opinion that the only barbarians are the barbarians who peddle refined culture for a few.

The greatness of Eliot is that he can withstand a glimpse at both the man and the work, which I believe are indivisible.

MICHAEL HASTINGS.

16 Felix Gardens, London SW2.

Sir, - Valerie Eliot's letter (February 10) commenting on my report in "Behind the lines" on Michael Hastings' new play *Tom and Viv* attributes to me an inference which is in fact that of the text I was discussing. As I wrote, "the play takes a clear line on whose decision it was to have the first Mrs Eliot certified."

Mrs Eliot also makes an editorial emendation which distorts what I wrote about the Eliot estate's acquisitions of unpublished material: "The Eliot Trustees acquire any documentary material [concerning Vivienne] that comes available." My reference was not specifically to Vivienne. Since, as Mrs Eliot's letter appears to confirm, the estate is acquiring any material that comes available, it is naturally impossible for me, or anyone else, to know what information it might or might not contain.

ROBERT HEWSON.

20 Peter Lane, London EC4.

Sir, - I have considerable sympathy with Robert Hewson's position over the Eliot play *Tom and Viv*. One can't dismiss his attitude as mere gossip-mongering, as Professor Knights does (Letters, February 10). Good poetry should reveal and not conceal; and if Eliot's diagnosis of the ills of our civilization in prose and poetry had its root in his own sexual dis-

ease and his relationship with the feminine, then we have a right to know. Otherwise we might be like him, speaking for everybody and not merely for a certain class of alienated person; and that the world is truly a Waste Land and

there is no hope for us outside his own solutions. The power of Eliot's poetry has helped create negative attitudes of this kind in the modern world and it is urgently important that we know their source and validity; true greatness always reveals the continuum between individual experience and society's patterns. Poetry should not be seen as a kind of Zepplin that poets inflate above their private estates to distract students and other inquirers with the floating aerial magnificence of it! and the tasteful, shiny out-of-reach untouchableness of it! PETER REDGROVE, Falmouth, Cornwall.

Sir, - It is not true, as William Baker asserts (Letters, February 10), that T. S. Eliot was still writing his "King Bolo" limericks "in the late 1950s". Almost all were written during his Harvard days and none later than 1916. Over the years he and Conrad Aiken would repeat or refer to them in conversation and correspondence.

VALERIE ELIOT, c/o Faber and Faber, 3 Queen Square, London WC1.

Michael Hastings's *Tom and Viv* is reviewed overleaf.

## The British Library

Sir, - "One hears that members of the Library's staff have been wounded by these recent criticisms", E. F. D. Roberts writes in his article on the British Library (February 3). The criticisms which he mentions are Lord Thomas's pamphlet *The Case for the Round Reading Room* and, cited anonymously, "articles in the *Sunday Telegraph* and *The Times*", the latter in fact by Lord Bruce-Gardyne, the former by myself.

"One" is a notoriously selective listener and although I was sorry to learn of these hurt feelings I was also surprised: others of us have heard very different reactions from Library employees.

This is not the place to review the story of how the "British Library" was conceived and, ten years ago, born, nor to rehearse the detailed arguments for and against the new building whose foundations are now being laid at St Pancras. But Roberts does nothing to justify the claims of the pro-building party or to refute the anti; nor does he, himself a distinguished professional librarian, allay the broader suspicion that the new building is only wanted by librarians and administrators for its own sake.

Everyone knows that the present arrangements at Bloomsbury are inefficient, although there are worse things than having to wait a day for a book (and incidentally "one hears" that even if and when the new building is finished it will not be large enough for the Library's entire stock: some of which will still have to be out-housed). On the other hand, there is plenty of room for readers. And while the problem of deterioration and the challenge of conservation are very serious it is hard to believe that they could not be solved with only a fraction of the many hundreds of millions of pounds which the St Pancras building is going to cost.

In my article I compared the Library with other organizations beginning with "British" - Leyland, Airways, Steel - whose defining characteristic is that they are run in the interests of producers, of employees, rather than of consumers. Mr Roberts only strengthens that impression. He is truly using a different language from readers at the Library with his talk of the "apex of the library system of the country", whatever quite that means, of "on-line computerized services" and of "hand-held electronic books" which "are no longer science fiction" (though he adds - wistfully? irritably? - that "it is too soon to envisage the end of the book as we know it"). It is hearing professional librarians talk like that which diagnoses both readers and, I believe, scholarly employees of the Library. Roberts says that administrators and scholars are "not necessarily different people" but one of the saddest parts of the history of the Library is precisely the gap which has opened between these two groups.

For all the wounded feelings, Roberts knows

that he has won. The mysterious "support at the highest levels of government" has seen to that, and we are going to have the new library building whether we like it or not. But we don't like it. I offer a simple challenge to Mr Roberts, to Sir Frederick Dainton, Chairman of the Board of the Library, and to Lord Eccles, whose memorial the new building is to be. Let us hold a plebiscite or poll among readers at the Library, with no canvassing and at an unannounced date. If a majority is in favour of the St Pancras building, we on the one side will drop the subject; if a majority is against, they will stop the building.

GEOFFREY WHEATCROFT, 5 Aubert Road, London N5.

## Judging Brecht

Sir, - If Melvin Lasky (Letters, February 3) still wonders why I raised the question of the language used in that Hook-Brecht conversation of 1935, he should read Sidney Hook's letter in the same issue. For "desto mehr verdienen Sie erschossen zu werden" would have meant that Professor Hook, not the arrested politicians, deserved to be shot. That capital "S" makes third-person plural into a form of second-person singular. Even though it could quite well be an error - by the writer, his typist or even the TLS - it certainly indicates some room for confusion.

Lasky says that I don't believe Brecht made such a remark, Hook that I do. What I did not accept was your reviewer's idea that it referred to the Moscow Trials: it was for him to check Hook's reference. But yes, I do think that Brecht may have said something of the sort (and in the third-person plural), because (a) he had an undue penchant for tortuous paradoxes, (b) the remark even as Hook translates it can be interpreted in more than one way, (c) Brecht liked shocking political opponents and (d) he would anyhow not be the only artist in the world to have said "the man should be shot" without reflecting what this really means. It's a stupid kind of thing to say, but we should not exaggerate Brecht's degree of political responsibility.

As for everything else in those two most indicative letters - the excited overstatements, the imputations of discreditable motives to myself, the choice vocabulary, the snide attitudes to a great writer - anyone still interested can (if you don't mind my saying so) check them against my new Brecht book. Meanwhile they may serve to illustrate why the 1950s-style "critical evaluation" of Brecht practised by *Encounter* rather jars when belatedly adopted by a reviewer in the TLS.

JOHN WILLET, Volta House, Windmill Hill, London NW3.

Sir, - The chilling winds of the Cold War tend to hamper any objective discussion of Bertolt Brecht. It has become a too-familiar phenomenon to see many of his critics assume the role of moral arbiter, smugly taking stock of his income, bank-accounts, passport, sex-life, sanitary habits and, above all, what he said when, to whom, before and after what.

One would think that not only Brecht's works but also his journals have well documented his political thinking - it is surprising how little of this easily obtainable knowledge finds its way into these polemics. It is a well-known fact that Brecht was no fan of Stalin; the praises of the Big Brother are few and far between. On the other hand, the poems mourning the loss of his friends in the Purges are among Brecht's most poignant and memorable - why then all this splitting of hairs from the demon's moustache? The murkiness of the "dark times" so often evoked in Brecht's poems is by no means confined to Hitler's Germany. The Webbs and Bernard Shaw (or even Winston Churchill in his wartime speeches), to name the first that come to mind, have been more or less left in peace for their openly voiced and published admiration for Stalin. Why single out "poor b.b." for fewer and far less fulsome remarks?

GEORGE EISLER, Bechardgasse 17/8, A-1030 Vienna.

*The Schveppes Guide to Scotch*, reviewed in the TLS of December 23, 1983, is published by Alphabooks, Sherborne, Dorset.

## Books from Oxford: History & Religion

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Sir Allister Hardy

Based on the work of the Religious Experience Research Unit in Oxford, this book was first published in 1979, arousing much interest and many reviews. Readers of this book will feel urged to look at their own inner life and experience. Bishop George Appleton in the *Daily Telegraph* Paperback £8.25 Clarendon Press

### Oxford University Press



# COMMENTARY

## Regenerative

Wilfrid Mellers

RICHARD WAGNER  
The Mastersingers  
Coliseum

Wagner started the book of *The Mastersingers* as early as 1845, during his quasi-political years. He put it aside under pressure of sublimar, more personal matters; by the time he seriously got around to the music he had completed much of *The Ring* and had wrung *Tristan* out of his (and Cosima's) heart's blood. *The Ring*, indirectly, *Tristan* more directly, tell Wagner's story archetypally, offering a programme for the regeneration of the despotic human race. Brünnhilde is the White Dove, the troubadour's Eternal Beloved to be won or lost; and the light and dark forces that fight for her are inextricably entangled. This is why the villainous Hagen has such uncanny potency and why Wotan – Wagner as penitent sinner and scapegoat – is one of the most humanly moving creatures in opera. It is also why Siegfried – Wagner as knight-errant and dragon-slayer – becomes his own betrayer: as in a sense Wagner was in his life-story. When Wagner described his work as the Modern Myth, he was saying that perfect love is the self made whole, and was reaffirming the nobility of man's aspirations. The long-range forms in which he incarnates this discovery dispense with the public conventions of aria and dance, eschew the solidarity of jolly fugato; there is no fugato, no dance, no aria, only the surge of the symphonic texture which must work out the motives' musical and experiential destiny. What comes out is a vision of Man as he might be, if men could be Wagner; and the "terrifying honesty" which Wagner shares with the very greatest artists lies in the fact that he ultimately admits that the "law of life" he organically creates is an illusion. *The Ring* ends with the gods' twilight. The message is that man must have the courage of his illusion, as well as the illusion of his courage.

At first glance *The Mastersingers* – which Wagner returned to, after twenty years, as an alleviation of *Tristan*'s anguish – seems remote from these Jungian archetypal themes. It takes place in a real city, medieval Nuremberg; it contains arias, or at least a Prize Song; it is full of jolly fugato and dances of social solidarity. The heart of the music, however, belies this, and would do so even if Wagner hadn't told us that the action really takes place in the minds of Wiltner and Sachs. Wiltner is Siegfried/Wagner the Artist-Hero; Sachs is Wotan/Wagner the Great Renouncer who loves but loses. Between them they seek, like Wagner, the regeneration of mankind. The cantankerous contentions of the guilds and the petty tyrannies of academic establishment are to be annealed by perfect love; and the Eternal Beloved is called Eva because she is Edenic. Like Elsa, an earlier Eve-figure from *Lohengrin*, Eva is also the German Folk, and in this way private myth becomes public, and personal re-

generation racial. Thus *The Mastersingers* veers and tacks between naturalistic presentation, as in the discomfiture of Beckmesser, and dreamy extravaganza, as in the fertility rite for the German People at the end. These disparities are of course mirrored in the music. We should not forget that Eve, in Eden's garden, provoked a serpentine Fall; and that amid the jovial junketings the true music of the New Age sounds, in Wiltner's initial oration, as over-ripe chromatic as is *Tristan*'s dying fall, while Sachs's heart-rending monologue confesses that "all poetry is but the truth of dreams made manifest". Intuitively, Wagner knew that his prescription for the solidarity of the blond Aryan race, hymned in the final choruses, was a cheat. After all, the Prize Song itself, like Elgar's "Land of Hope and Glory", might be described (though not dismissed) as codswallop of genius.

These veerings and tackings between levels of reality make *The Mastersingers* peculiarly difficult – even for a Wagner opera – to perform. It means much, therefore, that ENO's new production comes across almost as triumphantly as does Wagner's music. Elijah Moshinsky's theatrical direction is brilliant: anapologetic about the static approach necessitated by Wagner's vast vocal perorations, yet vibrant with activity in naturalistic events portending the demise of the old order (such as the Beckmesser squabble), and thrillingly visionary in presenting the finale as a new world's fecundity festival, tipsy with tumblers, blazing with vividly coloured phallic giants. Mark Elder's pacing of the score deploys the immense paragraphs in appropriately masterful fashion, yet allows the singers and the interlacing orchestral motives to reveal their expressive intimacies. The chorus sing like beings possessed, as they are in so far as they're representatives of Wagner's reborn race participating in what he called – uniquely in his oeuvre – but in the Greek sense accurately – a comedy. As Wiltner and Eva, Kenneth Woolam and Janice Cairns prove, as they grow to vocally heroic stature, how public renewal depends on the fulfilment of private love. In more socially respectable guise Sean Rea looks and sounds impressive as the goldsmith-capitalist father of innocently serpentine Eva; Alan Ople adroitly negotiates the tightrope between farce and pathos which Wagner's personally motivated debunking of the Critic entails. Graham Clark as Sachs's apprentice David acts with plebeian zest, and vocally measures up to his arduous first act. The key figure, Hans Sachs, is more problematical. The divinely inspired poet who also cobbles folk's shoes so that they may tread life's stonier paths, he's a John the Baptist to the New World that, given the illusory nature of human aspiration, may never materialize. Gwynne Howell sings the part with his habitual musicality and intelligence, and acts with unobtrusive persuasiveness; yet his noble voice just isn't big enough, for which reason his words are often inaudible. It's oddly touching that this limitation – this failure in materialization – should be revelatory of Wagner's deepest, if unconscious theme.

## AUTHOR. AUTHOR.

Competition No. 161  
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than March 9. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct.  
Entered, marked "Author, Author 161" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Fletty House, 31 John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX.  
1 Not only does it degrade them, on their life obscure, which were a fair dismissal. But it shows them lower than that did exist them high.  
2 As high as we have mounted in delight in our delusion do we sink as low.  
3 If a man will comprehend the richness and variety of the universe, and inspire his mind with a due measure of wonder and awe, he must contemplate the human intellect not only on its heights of genius but in its abysses of ineptitude.  
Competition No. 157  
Winner: Marie Scott  
Answer:  
1 Write in the word family because this may

Have to alter them. When the puzzle is solved, and like a satisfied lover, you lean back sighing and sleepy, then you will find that the black squares hide the secrets that you will never uncover.  
Vernon Scantell, "How To Fill In A Crossword Puzzle".  
2 Naturally, with this hobby in common, the young people saw a great deal of one another; for George was always looking in at the village to ask her if she knew a word of seven letters meaning "appertaining to the profession of plumbing", and Susan was just as constant a caller at George's cosy little cottage.  
P.G. Wodehouse, "The Truth About George".  
3 Ninety-nine down, a one-letter word meaning something indelible.  
The indefinite article of - would it perhaps be the personal pronoun?  
But what runs across 10? Four-letter word meaning something.  
With a bias to its opposite, the second letter must be the same as the one letter word.  
1. Multisyllabic. 2. Crossword puzzle.

## Authoritative

Hilary Spurling

MICHAEL HASTINGS  
Tom and Viv  
Royal Court Theatre

Michael Hastings's play about T. S. Eliot's first marriage opened last week in a flurry of recrimination, accusation and counter-accusation. Hastings takes the line that Eliot contrived at, if he did not actually contrive, a plot to have Vivienne Eliot certified insane and locked up for the last twelve years of her life; since her death she has been "Stalinised and turned into an unperson" according to Hastings, who claims to have been hampered in his research by "unusual difficulties", including the wholesale suppression of documents. The second Mrs Eliot, writing in this paper as her husband's sole trustee, emphatically denies both allegations, while others point out that Hastings has simply made up at least half the evidence on which Vivienne is convicted of madness in his play, a charge to which he cordially confesses: "In the absence of photographs, I have to make drawings".

Certainly his play has the clarity, assurance and emotional precision of a fine line-drawing together with the distortions, omissions and unconventional shifts of emphasis inherent in any but the most superficial attempt at portraiture. Hastings's scorn for the corresponding falsification of the supposedly objective or photographic school of biography is clear from a characteristically terse and humorous scene in which the Eliots visit a photographer: "Sir's hand on madam's neck. Madam's neck yearns. Less chin. More neck. Sir's brow is not furrowed. We look intense in the distance. Far as we can see . . .". The ensuing society portrait represents the view of the poet preferred by his in-laws, the Haigh-Woods, a well-to-do, well-disposed upper-middle-class family determined to make the best of a somewhat unrepresentable, underbred, unemployed foreigner sadly in need of discreet touching up (bespoke suits, handmade shoes, the bank job and regular bridge rubbers constitute the Haigh-Woods' hospitable scheme for bringing Eliot up to scratch as a son-in-law).

Falling documentary evidence, Hastings's principal informant was Vivienne's brother, the late Maurice Haigh-Wood, characterized here as a prime chump (an irresistible performance of Wodehousean spirit and delicacy by David Haig), freely admitted by all including himself to be perfectly brainless. Hence presumably Hastings's unfamiliar view of an Eliot who, in Tom Wilkinson's commanding performance, bears the unmistakable ring of truth; and yet, for all his moral and (in so far as anyone can say from photographs) physical likeness to the poet, this gauche, maladroit, indefinably shabby Eliot, so mysteriously enthralled by that English tradition embodied in the stolid, incurious, inarticulate, near-philistine Haigh-Woods, in no way corresponds to contemporary accounts of the elegant, urbane Bostonian whose intellectual brilliance and daring bowled over all comers on a broad front in London in the 1920s. The sense of multiple cross-purposes that underpins this play is nicely articulated, from the other way on, so to speak, by Margaret Tyzack's Mrs Haigh-Wood, stranded at a Bohemian fancy dress ball: a manly figure of regal respectability, gaudy but grim in her weirdly inappropriate Marie Antoinette shepherdess's outfit with hoops and little pink bows (the Eliots have come as Crippen and Ethel ne Neve), dismally surveying the cream of Bloomsbury: "There isn't a face I can put a name to".

The play might be said to show Maurice and his parents floundering gallantly out of their depth in a world that inexorably excludes Vivienne as an outsider, dismissed with supercilious contempt by intellectuals anxious to assert proprietary rights to her husband, Bertrand Russell (who was, like Asquith, captivated by her at their first meeting) recorded his automatic initial assumption that the wife Eliot had produced from nowhere was bound to be stable. The play as it were constantly struts and feigns against this possibility, callousness and misanthropy and there is a memorably con-

ical scene in which Vivienne prepares to read *The Waste Land* to her politely unenthusiastic father, and another in which she and Tom cover their intolerable, chill isolation with Cockney clowning.

Julie Covington's Vivienne – a small fierce flame that flares, spurts, gutters and constantly rekindles – is a *tour-de-force*. The tone of Mar Stafford-Clarke's production is grave, subtle, humorous and penetrating. One or two of the script's more sensational scenes – Eliot's attempted suicide on Margate beach in 1921, and a semi-fascist speech to assembled literati in the 1930s – have been cut in performance. Otherwise the tricks Hastings invents for Vivienne – notably her pouring melted chocolate through Faber's letterbox – seem hardly more mischievous than the celebrated practical jokes perpetrated by Eliot himself who, according to his friend Robert Sencourt, once sent a pair of severed human ears to his fellow directors at Faber. What is authentic is the sense of pain and perturbation, loneliness and mutual consolation, inside a marriage that ended in withdrawal, coldness and flight. Though the play does not press the point, it would be hard to deny that some such private experience probably lay behind the poetry of the 1920s. Hastings's drawing has an impressive authority: whether it would be so persuasive if the subjects were unknown – Bruce and Yvonne, say, or Ron and Eth – is another matter.

Letters on *Tom and Viv* appear on page 161.

## Traditional

Jonathon Brown

Rembrandt to Seurat  
National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh

*Rembrandt to Seurat* shows us thirty-five of the pictures that have been acquired by the Department of Prints and Drawings of the National Gallery of Scotland in the past five years. It is a tantalizing display for the questions it poses, never mind the high quality and generous range of the items themselves. For one thing it is a bold gesture. The department that most appear the most vulnerable of all the gallery's services has stepped forward with pride to defy all that might be set against it. Money has been made to stretch far, and, looking in the department's divided duty has been nicely maintained. Yet some of these pictures may never be displayed again; and the department will once again retreat into the privacy and public irrelevance that are part of its vulnerability. Prints and drawings are numerous and also extremely delicate, and therefore it is at least troublesome, and maybe risky too, to put up permanent exhibitions. Yet here we have pictures by Rembrandt, Ingres, Whistler, Palmer, Manet, Goya, Seurat and others, that should have an audience wider than those who will specially ask to see them. An audience should be created as much as merely served. Those who have valued the Matisse museum in Nice for its stylish counter-rack of drawings will listen to the expert reservations with impatience.

A further thought, though, is prompted by the sense of a European tradition that these pictures express. We have come to think of galleries from modern-art-galleries, and have particular interest in this case, not simply because of the new and large Gallery of Modern Art to be opened here in August, but because of the decision announced last week by the effect that certain pictures by Bonnard and Vuillard in the National Gallery would be moved there. Nowhere, however, is the continuity of old art more instantly apparent than in drawings and prints – the Rembrandts in the exhibition, a pristine etching of erotic rapture between Jupiter and Antiope, awaits only Pissarro to rival its delight. With the National Gallery's London planning to tuck away its oldest and naissant works in the new building, a division appears, to their regret, of prints and drawings, to their regret, of prints, freshness and power, to their regret, of the fullest tradition and creative largeness.

## Proclaiming flesh

David Rosand

Willem de Kooning: Drawings, Paintings, Sculpture  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

A major retrospective of the paintings, drawings and sculpture of Willem de Kooning offers an occasion for celebration and evaluation of the achievement of the eighty-year-old American master. The work on view at the Whitney is life-asserting in every way. Fairly large, with over 100 paintings and twenty-five sculptures, plus an independent section of 133 drawings, the exhibition seems larger for the sheer energy of the images on the walls. Although one might quibble about the balance of the selection – the critical years around 1948–1950 might have been more fully represented, whereas the landscapes of the 1970s may seem, to some, too generously present – the overall impression is one of creative exuberance, a *jouissance de la peinture*, and integrity on a grand scale, the manifest coherence of de Kooning's long career as an artist. Even his earliest paintings, both abstract and figurative, declare a maturity and confidence that set him apart from his American contemporaries – even as he may be said to have shared the search for identity, personal and professional, which seems to have been inevitable for artists in America. Notwithstanding their sombre social-realist palette and a sense of isolation, de Kooning's figures of 1938–1939 are rendered with sureness of touch and precision; painting and drawing interact in a way that will continue to inform his art.

From the beginning the process of painting itself appears as part of form and content; that process, which would become more critical to his imagery in the late 1940s and most blatant in the tortured *Woman* series, shapes the meaning of his first major (extant) efforts as a painter. Already de Kooning's aesthetic is that of palimpsest: painted over in a variety of modes – from roughly impetuous effacement to the careful masking of contrived silhouettes – the surface becomes the record of repeated attack. Its complex exchange of figure-ground relationships is given graphic articulation by the tense lines of charcoal drawing; and those imposed lines in turn submit to the sweep of the brush stroke, further enriching the imaging process and its results. What is so striking in these early figures is de Kooning's confidence in his searching procedures – paradoxically dramatized by the curious erasure of hands, the deliberate and poignant cancellation of the expressive and shaping agents of the body. And it is this confidence that allows him to step back and accept process as image, openness as structure – quite different from the more desperate search for style and identity of his friend, Arshile Gorky.

Training tells: de Kooning's academic background (in his native Rotterdam) seems to have stood him in good stead as a master painter. An impressive technical control sustains all his work – perhaps especially when he is reduced to working with commercial enamel and a palette of black and white. The struggles recorded on the surface of the canvas involve not the means, the medium, but the end, the image, as the artist paints himself into and out of the picture (the terms are his). Engaging his painting with a physically that has been too easily parodied (in criticism and in practice) but rarely imitated, de Kooning arrives at a pictorial logic which has the inevitability of spatial structure, of planar relations, surface tensions, of colour and gesture as space. The very reach of the artist, in some Vitruvian sense, controls the scale of the image: "If I stretch my arms . . . and wonder where my fingers are – that is all the space I need as a painter." And so he avoids the largest dimension of formalism in his choice of canvases, especially the horizontal field, presumably because its lateral extremes would be beyond his reach.

De Kooning's picture-making is a complex series of gestures, of interventions and exclusions with an evolving image. The scale of those gestures recalls the human dimension of the maker, and represents a record of the fullest tradition and creative largeness.

painter's body in action. Calligraphy on that scale becomes choreography: paint mediates between painter and painting, maker and image. In the evolution of de Kooning's art, as well as of the individual pictures, the entire history of the medium in all its sensuous substance is evoked. "Flesh was the reason why oil painting was invented." And de Kooning's declaration speaks with legitimate authority for his great forebears, Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt. Indeed, his own working procedure – the process of gesture and response, of delayed scrutiny and repeated attack, of radical pictorial surgery – parallels the accounts we have of Titian himself at work. Hardly a question of influence or emulation, the similarity reaffirms and ex-

figure served to articulate an iconography of the brush-stroke. Gestures previously invented found more precise meaning with reference to the figural image; nor would they ever lose the accreted weight of their significance. Even as de Kooning moved to an imagery of abstract landscapes, individual strokes, gestures developed in the earlier figures continue to carry by allusion and recollection their sense of anatomy – just as the recurring pink proclaims the flesh. This calligraphy of the body runs through de Kooning's subsequent work: breasts, buttocks, crotch, knees and especially mouth – each unit of anatomy has found itself transposed and fixed as a particular configuration of brush strokes. (De Kooning's bronze



"Woman III", 1952–53, by Willem de Kooning, from the exhibition reviewed here.

tends the grand tradition of oil painting on canvas.

Among the first colours to emerge from de Kooning's monochrome palette of the late 1930s is a flesh pink. Modulated from near neutrality to cosmetic blowness, this hue never abandons its significance: throughout his work, it declares flesh. As de Kooning's paint itself acquires an increased substance, which in turn inspires and provokes the aggressiveness of the brush, his visceral equation of impasto and flesh becomes still more integral to his art. This phenomenology of paint is most obviously realized in the *Woman* series (from c. 1950 onwards). Comprising what are undoubtedly de Kooning's most (in)famous paintings, the series marks a watershed in his career: the return to figuration allowed the artist to acknowledge overtly the physiognomic basis of his painterly style, its source in the gestures of the body. Reassociated with the image of the body, de Kooning's brushwork claimed a new complexity: at once referential and mimetic, the stroke engaged with new determination in the central exchange between figure and ground.

It is as though the renewed experience of the

sculpture is similarly anatomical, the mould of the material correlative to flesh; the small casts of individual parts of those manipulated bodies are like individual strokes concretized in bronze.) Within the expanse of an apparently abstract canvas, a few telling marks are enough to confirm a title like "Woman in Landscape" or to sustain our natural (bodily) rapport with an "Untitled". We are encouraged to trust our response to these canvases, to recognize ourselves within their pictorial logic. "A picture to me is not geometric – it has a face."

At the Whitney Museum, the viewer, moving through corridors of joyous pink, celebrations of paint/flesh, is reminded of Rubens. Following the landscaped figures, a series of more abstract landscapes from the 1970s demonstrates the inventive momentum of the master's brush, generating imagery out of gesture. Again, but somehow on a higher level, these triumphant canvases give full testimony to creative fury. In image after image, de Kooning's repertory of strokes and his palette were infected – pushed, dragged, pressured, coaxed – to yield a remarkable range of nuance and mood, moving subtleties emerging from a realm of painterly exuberance. And within

the worlds of these paintings a new light glows; white comes to play an increasing role, luminous impasto edging its way into the impetuous action and paint splatter. Looking at them, one wants to talk of pure painting, of the essence of the act of painting, but de Kooning's art itself had taught important lessons on that score: too much real life is caught in those canvases. One of them, "Untitled V, 1977", in the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, must rank as one of the great wavescapes in the history of painting: Jörn Merkert, in his essay in the catalogue (*Willem de Kooning: Drawings, Paintings, Sculpture*, 308pp, 321 illustrations, 143 in colour, \$45, \$25 paperback, 0 393 018407), not inappropriately adduces Courbet for comparison.

Curators from each of the participating museums were responsible for the selection of works and contributed essays to the catalogue: Paul Cummings on the drawings, Jörn Merkert on the paintings, and Claire Stoullig on the sculpture. To an American public the international sponsorship and curatorial co-operation involved afford an interesting perspective on arguably the greatest artist of that heroic generation that made New York the capital of contemporary painting and Abstract Expressionism the dominant creative model for that painting. For the European critics, seeking to accommodate this phenomenon to their own past and present, de Kooning must evidently be set into a wider art-historical context, his rough manner in sculpture, for instance, tested (understandably) against Rodin and Matisse or (perhaps less compellingly) viewed through the response of a younger German artist like Georg Baselitz. Jörn Merkert, in particular, seems intent upon presenting de Kooning as exemplum for the younger generation of neo-Expressionists. His essay transposes the elements of search, personal and technical, and of creation through deconstruction into a phenomenology that does not always ring true in its heavily tenebrous mood.

The last paintings in the exhibition date from 1981 and 1982, and they seem the profound work of an old master. Still exuberant, their designs and energies clearly relate to all that preceded them. And yet they are different: the rhythms are much more deliberate, meditated even, and the space more open. Gestures still recall the physiognomy of their origins in the body, but within their monumental calligraphy a new order prevails, a new calm. Most revealing, perhaps, the visceral quality of paint itself has been chastened. Scraping and smoothing, de Kooning has purified his stroke, and what had been quintessentially sensuous is rendered immaterial, ethereal, a veiled tracing of its physical origins. Continuing to insist upon his own creative energy, the old master has come to new terms with his medium, and what we witness is a sort of transcendence of the body, of flesh, of paint. No other living painter quite commands his art this way – better: lives through his art this way.

*Willem de Kooning: Drawings, Paintings, Sculpture* can be seen at the Whitney Museum, New York, until February 26, and subsequently at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, from March 11 to April 29, and at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, from June 26 to September 24.

*Cobra* by Jean-Clarence Lambert (261pp, Sotheby, £37.50, 0 85667 178 9) tells the story of the revolutionary art movement founded in 1948 in Paris by artists and writers from Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands. The name was coined from the initial syllables of Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam by the poet and critic Christian Dotremont, whose writings on the movement are reproduced in the book. Committed to revolt against reason and order, the principal artists in the group – Asger Jorn, Karel Appel and Pierre Alechinsky – concerned themselves with spontaneity and with the amalgamation of painting, writing and sculpture. *Cobra's* three sections describe the antecedents of the movement in the three countries, the "collective adventure" of the three years of the movement's existence, and the subsequent influence of its members.

J.P. 11.10.1984



# Luxuriantly designing

Simon Rae

**PETER SCUPHAM**  
*Winter Quarters*  
 64pp. Oxford University Press. £4.50.  
 0192119575  
**KEVIN CROSSLEY-HOLLAND**  
*Time's Oriel*  
 61pp. Hutchinson. £4.95.  
 0091532914  
**JOHN LEVETT**  
*Changing Sides*  
 51pp. Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets. £3.  
 0905291433  
**PHILIP GROSS**  
*Familars*  
 32pp. Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets. £3.  
 0905291468

In keeping with its title, *Summer Palaces*, Peter Scupham's last collection dealt in opulence. Committed to capturing on the page the exasperating beauties and perfection of nature ("How should her creatures best express her?"), Scupham unfortunately opened his poems to the sort of didactic English poetry has been trying to rid itself of since before the publication of the last Georgian anthology. Typical were lines like "First flowers work their samplers", "The horses turn their dipping carousel", "Beneath refining decibels of lark-song". *Winter Quarters*, the title of his new book, would seem to promise a sparser, bleaker poetry, and when we discover from the back of the volume that its theme is "war, rumours of war, records of past war, preparations for war, and the ever-present possibility of war in our time", we may indeed expect a more restrained exercise of Peter Scupham's considerable powers. Consider, however, the concluding lines of "Pathfinder", about listening for the bombers returning from their night raids over Germany:

From this out common ground, we cannot whole  
 That distinction in the homing waves  
 Which speaks of tears, which speaks of tears and flame.

With their obvious designs on us, the repetitions in the last line cheapen what, with memories of the Falklands war still fresh, we would otherwise acknowledge as carrying a powerful emotional charge.

"Pathfinder" and other poems about a Cambridge childhood during the Second World War lead naturally into a sequence, "Conscriptions: National Service '52-'54". Peter Scupham is a great one for sequences. This one runs to twelve poems, which might be thought excessive in view of the modest three Henry Reed allowed himself in "Lessons of War". Where Reed catches poignantly the clash between the civilian mind – bored, irreverent, randily nostalgic for lost freedoms – and the brutish military by bringing the registers of the two antipathetic worlds into ironic juxtaposition, Scupham does nothing to exploit such linguistic possibilities. No creative tension is generated between the very few samples of army language: "Take his name, Sergeant, and dismiss", "Your weapons are given to you to kill the enemy" – and Scupham's own highly exclusive brand of poetic discourse. A laboured attempt at humour pervades the sequence, along with a sort of knowing allusiveness. "Assault Course" with its opening, "Taran is swinging, all his vibrations / On immanent display", goes on to take in "Lieutenant Robin" and his "Balm", "Carver / Doone, Moriarty, Alan Quartermain, and Tom Sawyer". Sentences "is making better progress when 'Let it all pass: ay, that's the effort way' creeps up, predilecting us suddenly into the midst of Dogberry, Verges and the Watch. It's as though Scupham simply cannot perceive a situation of event without thinking of its literary analogue. Time and again, he interposes his highly literary sensibility between the reader and the subject.

It's a relief to find a more stringent approach in a later sequence, "Notes from a War Diary", where material from the diary of the poet's father-in-law is presented in refreshing telegraphese: "Epertay. Took Jorry along. Dorman road. Under shellfire, dodging shells for a joke". Other poems in *Winter Quarters* deal with more familiar topics – places and landscapes, painting, other writers. Those who

have developed a taste for Peter Scupham's luxuriantly rich descriptive passages and technical virtuosity will find much to enjoy here, especially, perhaps, "Fachwen: The Falls". For those who require a more robust engagement with life, the book will prove disappointing.

Much of the inspiration for the poems in Kevin Crossley-Holland's last collection, *The Dream House*, was drawn from the isolated communities and wilderness landscapes of the far north. It was a bleak collection, touched by a discomfiting unhappiness. *Time's Oriel*, coming after a gap of seven years, contains more sunlight and has a less oppressive air, though with a translation of "The Wanderer" from Old English (the poet's specialty as a translator) as a backdrop, there's no danger of unwelcome optimism breaking out: "Nothing is ever easy in the kingdom of earth... / Here possessions are fleeting, here friends are fleeting, / here man is fleeting, here kinsman is fleeting...".

Much of the strength of the original poems can be illustrated by the opening lines of "The Monk's Reflections":

Too much consistency: at last I dared  
 Kick the comfortable restraints, the bells'  
 Gentle hubbub, fraternal silences,  
 Dispersals and reunions.

Here the pentameter is well accommodated to the dramatic speaking voice, which, while seeming to come to us across the centuries, nevertheless addresses us with a contemporary urgency. It is the sort of thing John Fuller can bring off. And there is something reminiscent

of Fuller too in poems about childhood, especially "Grandmother's Footsteps", which evokes the menace lurking in children's games.

Poems arising from visits to Bavaria and India show a widening of geographical horizons for this northward-looking poet, but Crossley-Holland still convinces most when operating on familiar territory. "Nenie", an elegy to a much-loved grandmother set against a grudging northern shoreline, displays, along with other poems confronting death, a moving directness of emotional expression without any hint of mawkishness or self-regard. *Time's Oriel* marks the welcome return of a poet whose real but unobtrusive qualities should endear him to a growing circle of readers.

"The small, consistent waves / Slap wanly at their shins", writes John Levett in one poem, and that unfortunately is rather the effect of his persistent iambs coming up the page at you. Rhythmic relentlessness, coupled with predominantly end-stopped lines and perfect rhymes, make his first collection, *Changing Sides*, a slightly laborious read. Not that it doesn't contain some good poems. "The Insect House", which won the *New Statesman's* Prudence Farmer Award in 1982, is an example. So too is "Preaks", which begins:

Not of all them are genuine,  
 This older woman with a cock  
 Has come apart and shows the join.  
 But then again, not all are fake....

Levett certainly has a poet's eye for where life shows the join. There's an uncomfortable poem, "A Letter from my Aunts", about the

seems best", or in the closing stanza of "Moles":

Our minor beings are not wide enough  
 To let great love rear hills on their estate.  
 Their scope includes the gesture and the sigh,  
 But not the fire to leave them desolate.

As the volume proceeds, and we move into the 1960s and 70s, various influences work themselves out (the Movement's and the Group's; Graves' on some of the love poems, such as "Eight Investigations"), and Brownjohn's personal, finicky way with syntax is given its head, and its heart. The desire to "sublime this / Craving in verbal charts" ("Epistemology") gets less chart-like and more authentic. "A202" does for a main road, improbably, something of what Auden does for limestone; "Lines for a Birthday", about the life and hard times of an American girl, is an enjoyable miniature novel; "Letter to America" is as delightful a love poem as "Projection" is effectively sinister. Two of the obsessions that quietly stalk the poems are insomnia and vertigo, which find a verbal counter-part, perhaps, in the poet's fondness for long sinuous sentences, choppy line-breaks, and the locations "sort-of" and "kind-of", dubious qualifiers that crop up again and again.

Someone else who crops up quite frequently is the Old Fox, first cousin to Stephen Potter's gamesman, who finds a variety of ways to outwit a hostile world. He's an appealing character,

inability to muster a convincing language in which to reply to the simple well-wishings of elderly relations – "And all my letters back appear as crude, / False essays in sincerity beside / This gentle and unearned solicitude". Other poems, on both private and public themes, show a distinctive poetic personality in the making. I only hope that by the time he publishes his second volume, Levett has tempered his undoubted technical ability with a little tact.

Philip Gross's *Familars* is really only half a book (a full collection is promised from Faber this year), but it makes a good introduction to his work. Like Levett, Gross revels in the exercise of formal skills, but employs both rhyme and metre with more subtlety. While several of the poems are concerned with the darker end of history – the wasted lives of tin workers on Dartmoor, or those of transients shuffled across Europe to displaced persons camps, Gross has a lighter side. In "The Golden Age", he muses on a "curious machine for our delight, / This garden where Stakhanovite bees muscle to the job, unanimous, / ecstatic", which has about it something of Christopher Reid's playfulness in *Arcadia*. Gross also has a good eye for the striking image: a newborn baby's "venerable head, veined parchment, purple / muddled pad of a fabulous country, pulsing"; snails "brace / on the hawser of themselves", while jellyfish, "slow-flouncing", appear as "small fantasies / in see-through lace". It will be interesting to watch this talent developing.

but surely murdering your opponent in the Wimbledon final – as he does at his first appearance – is a little too melodramatic and surreal for such a staunchly empirical Anglo-Saxon as this? Elsewhere he bores committee meetings silly, arranges his own retirement present, and runs rings around the gas company's accounts department. (I look forward to hearing, at some future date, about his Orbridge Third and his no doubt appalling love life.) The more directly satirical poems – "In Hertfordshire", "Centre Point", the long sequence "A Song of Good Life" – tend to the prosaic and predictable. On the other hand "Office Party" is both amusing and shrewd, and "William Empson at Aldermaston" (a left and right hands worked busily together / A parliament or two / And there she stands: Twelve miles of cooling pipes...) is perhaps one of the best and most coolly intelligent protest poems written during the cold war, anticipating, in many of its details, Mailer's high-temperature masterpiece *The Armies of the Night*.

Having abolished logical commerce between declarative and prescriptive sentences – what is and what ought to be – David Hume invented the notion of "calm passions" as the engine that powers our moral life. It is precisely the areas indicated by that phrase that Brownjohn's best poems explore. "Dea ex machina", for example, wittily and tenderly takes apart, and holds together, modern relationships. "Holding Hands with Pregnant Women" – the titles get better too, as the book moves on – anatomizes, again with tender precision, the needs and fears and failures of not-so-young lovers. "A Bad Cat Poem" finds a vivid extended metaphor for sexual frustration. "The Pool" brilliantly reanimates classic intimations of powerlessness and death. Beneath the decorous surface of many of these poems, there's a deal of frustration and anger spilling and clawing its way out. One wouldn't want Brownjohn to turn confessional, but it would do him no harm, perhaps, to ration the super-grammatical irony and learn to beat his breast a little more often.

Two more excellent poems by Brownjohn, not included here, in the Poetry Book Society's current Winter Supplement (£1.50. Available from the Poetry Book Society, 108 Piccadilly, London W1 or the Arts Council Shop, 8 Long Acre, London WC2) indicate that he is not only writing consistently better than at any other time in his career. Over a long period he has made himself into one of our very best makers, and the *Collected Poems* is a timely reminder of his unshowy virtues.

# A suitable case for treatment

E. G. Knox

**RUDOLF KLEIN**  
*The Politics of the National Health Service*  
 198pp. Longman. Paperback, £4.25.  
 0582296021  
**STEVE ILLIFFE**  
*The NHS: A Picture of Health?*  
 224pp. Lawrence and Wishart. Paperback, £3.95.  
 0853155739

Each of these books describes the political history of the NHS, its social origins, its early growth, the checks upon its development and its changes of direction. They give accounts of the early hopes, the later disillusionments, and of the financial and social problems. They each look at the NHS's current state and uncertain future; but they differ substantially in style and approach.

Rudolf Klein's concern is with the political process alone, which he analyses and presents in a (more or less) detached manner. Steve Illiffe approaches his theme at a lower altitude and descends occasionally to a more partisan political point of view, so that his later chapters are an exercise in advocacy as much as an analysis of options. From time to time he also raises questions of health and of health care. Klein is concerned with the wood and offers little with respect to the trees, while Illiffe dodges in and out from the margins of the forest. The million or so NHS-creatures who live within that forest will have to struggle to establish connections between their own lives and the larger political processes which these authors describe.

Klein's primary concern with political process leads him to treat the successive NHS developments as particular examples of general phenomena as they might be found in "a whole range of social, institutional and organizational experiments". His book is not about health, nor about professional activities within the health service, nor about the delivery of health care, nor the design of health-care systems, nor about any of the things which professional health workers would identify as part of their business. Successive chapters deal with the creation of the NHS, with its subsequent consolidation, with periods of change and disillusionment, and with its internal and external conflicts. Many of its later problems are attributed to unresolved early conflicts, fudged almost to the point of obliteration, but then incorporated indelibly in the service's structure. Although the names of politicians and professional people are listed, their statements quoted and their actions described, Klein's general thesis is that events sprang from forces and events which in the main transcended individual actions. In human terms, the NHS's development is represented as a moving consensus established among a succession of many actors. The main movements are represented as a flight from the intolerable, down the ways of least political resistance, rather than the pursuit of a grand plan.

Illiffe's book is closer to journalism than to political history. He pays more respect to the intentions of people and committees, and to the consequences of their decisions, and less to the pressures under which they worked. He is less meticulous in his documentation; there are no references at the end of the chapters and the short bibliography of twenty-six books and papers at the end of the book is presented as "useful sources of ideas and information", rather than as specific support for the statements and arguments of the text. The continual hunchings of the NHS from crisis to crisis, and from conflict to conflict, are described well enough, together with the pushings and pullings between the financing of the NHS itself, and the stop/go economics of the country as a whole. Illiffe describes the almost random switches of emphasis between the concern for equity, efficiency, effectiveness, capital investment, salaries and wages, consumer participation, private practice, decentralization, drug bills, pay-beds, prescription charges and so on, but the political forces which determined these events are described without Klein's detachment or penetration, and with a greater credulity regarding the importance of ideological drives.

The most striking difference between the two accounts possibly is that Illiffe refers to health and health-care problems, and to the inner workings of the NHS, as if he thought they mattered, and as if some understanding of them was necessary for following the evolutionary history of the whole, while Klein makes no such concessions. How is it, then, that his book achieves the more penetrating and convincing analysis? Is there a fatal flaw in his argument, hidden by sleight-of-hand and by a superior skill in presentation? Or could it actually be true that the political issues and forces are quite disconnected from the operational objectives and functions of the NHS, and from the question of its performance? Are NHS staff justified in believing – as some undoubtedly do – that politics is an inaccessible "other world", capable of affecting their lives and work, but with which no communication is possible? On such an assessment, Illiffe's references to NHS functions would be seen as no more than diversionary and unnecessary reliefs from the study of the political processes.

There is no misunderstanding Klein's theme. The NHS is "successful", not because it improves health or controls disease or makes health-care more accessible or effective, but because it "earns its political keep". This in turn derives from the facts that a) its customers like it, and say so firmly whenever they are asked, so that governmental or party support for the NHS gains political support in return; and b) it has evolved from an organization trying to meet an open-ended commitment to provide adequate levels of care for all, to one which, through ensuring a relative fairness of distribution, "appears to make scarcity acceptable". It has developed into an efficient instrument for limiting demand. Future options are also seen in political terms, and include "less bureaucracy, less centralization, less deference to professional expertise, more self help, more consumer participation, and more tolerance of diversity". Illiffe sees the future likewise as involving such political or confrontational issues as medical interference in social questions, centralization versus decentralization, the percentage of the GNP allocated to health care, controlling the professionals, participatory democracy, patient power... and so on.

In Klein's words, "the different ideological languages are to a large extent delivering the same message". The schism is, therefore, one between political ideologies as such and a genuine concern for the standards and effectiveness of the health services.

We must be clear about the nature of the disconnection between the two fields of endeavour. We are not to infer that political decisions regarding the NHS have no effect upon sickness and health; they undoubtedly do. Decisions inimical to the effectiveness of programmes for controlling cervical cancer, or perinatal mortality or tobacco consumption can result in casualties equivalent to the loss of a battleship, of a battle fleet, or of a major military campaign. The question is rather whether considerations of life lost or health gained enter into the political processes, and whether political objectives incorporate anything at all of the tasks which a health service accepts and tries to perform. The answer seems to be that they do not, and this leads one to ask another question: if the politicians determining health policy pay no attention to health, or to health-care delivery, or its standards and effectiveness, so that they are in no position to set or to implement or to monitor health-related programmes, then who in fact does undertake these responsibilities? Neither of these books tells us.

The answer, strangely, is that no one does. The NHS management enquiry, conducted in 1983 under the chairmanship of Roy Griffiths, commented acidly that "if Florence Nightingale were carrying her lamp through the corridors of the DHSS today she would almost certainly be searching for the people in charge". It may not have occurred to readers unfamiliar with the inner workings of the Service, that it differs from all other nationalized industries in having no head office, no director, no board of management, no comprehensive public statements of productivity or performance, not much in the way of defined standards and no real basis whereby its relative success could be compared with alternative arrangements in

this or in other countries. For three and a half decades the politicians and civil servants of the DHSS have been unable to make up their minds whether they are simply a political office, or whether they should develop a role as an NHS Head Office. They have oscillated hopelessly between the equally unpalatable prospects of taking charge of the health services on their own account, and letting someone else do so.

Klein's picture of a service burdened by the conflicts and defects incorporated in it at birth is possibly complacent. It might be more realistic to accept that the political process initiated forty years ago, and designed to bring the NHS into being, was never really completed. The defects were built in at the conception rather than at birth, and the development became arrested in mid-gestation in a kind of perpetual loop, so that the NHS never really came into being. The process has not even now emerged from the phase of political negotiation. The "NHS" has no directorate of its own, no strategic planning office, no publicly stated health-orientated national objectives or commitments, no address and no telephone number. It exists mainly as a name on one or two Acts of Parliament. The operational position has been maintained through a scattered and changing pattern of appointed authorities, and through the devoted and largely undirected service of its million doctors, nurses, ancillary workers, administrators and other professional staff, and the liaison work – rather than the direction – of civil servants and politicians temporarily detached from their main activities.

Could this after all be the best way, so that we might contemplate another thirty years of a headless cottage industry, pursuing a variety of self-set courses in effective isolation from the political merry-go-round? Probably not. The NHS is already in bad need of repair, with morale declining among its staff, and a steady development of confrontations between the service as a whole and the government, and between different professional groups within it. It is badly in need of a period of policy development based on good sense, good intelligence and good science, and free from costly and time-consuming administrative tinkering.

The confrontational positions and future directions which Klein and Illiffe see as "options" will not help us here. They relate to another world, of committed politics, whose premises are scarcely compatible with any recognition of a need for scientific enquiry or professionally skilled analysis, with its risks of unwelcome answers and unwelcome questions. Faced with such a dilemma, those in committed positions traditionally adopt an obscurantist stance, and there is evidence in both these books that this has now happened. Both authors identify a growth of "anti-expert" feelings in the NHS and foresee more to come along these lines; and this, in a service whose whole rationale is to provide scientifically-based expert advice on matters of health, in relation both to individuals and to populations. In this other world, the professions are char-

acterized only as interest groups, manipulating their salaries, their pecking-orders and their conditions of service; their true professional roles are almost denied. There is little mention in either book of the developments in health-services research, in the past ten years. There is almost no mention of those extensions of professional responsibilities for Public Health into the broader arena of health-care planning, embraced by the medical speciality of Community Medicine. References to the statistical and epidemiological data on which performance-measures are based, and to the professional advisory structures maintained by the DHSS and through which professionals present their views, are so disparaging ("to keep the doctors happy") that one suspects that at this point the authors have gone a little beyond objective reportage and commentary. But not very much beyond.

The pervasiveness of this obscurantism has recently been confirmed from quite a different source. *The Annual Review of Government-funded Research and Development* for 1983 gives the scale of research in a number of different areas. The DHSS is the largest-spending government department of all, yet the proportion of government-funded research allocated to it amounted only to 0.7 per cent of the total, less than the year before. It would be difficult from such evidence to infer the existence of any concern whatever for the performance of the service.

No one is nowadays so naive as to suggest that the management and development of our health services is a scientific and professional matter alone, or to deny that social and political values must play their proper part in deciding its priorities and practices. However, there is a serious need to create an environment in this country in which health objectives and the scientific measure of performance have their place, and where they can guide the decisions which must be made. If the new board of management achieves a degree of separation between the running of the service itself and the processes described in these two books, then the NHS might yet escape from the cycle of confrontation and indecision, set itself some real objectives and achieve something which many had despaired of seeing in their lifetimes.

King Edward's Hospital Fund for London has published *Health surveys in practice and in potential: a critical review of their scope and methods* (227pp. Distributed by Oxford University Press. £8.50. 0 19 724623 0) written by Ann Cartwright after a study commissioned by the SSRC, supported by it and the DHSS. Subject areas examined have ranged from the 1943-52 annual Survey of Sickness (which spanned the introduction of the NHS), and health sections of the General Household Survey, to controlled studies of tonsillectomy, or the management of hypertension by general practitioners. Among over fifty discussed, many concern the use made of health services, their acceptability and organization. Ethical questions are raised, and methodological techniques assessed.

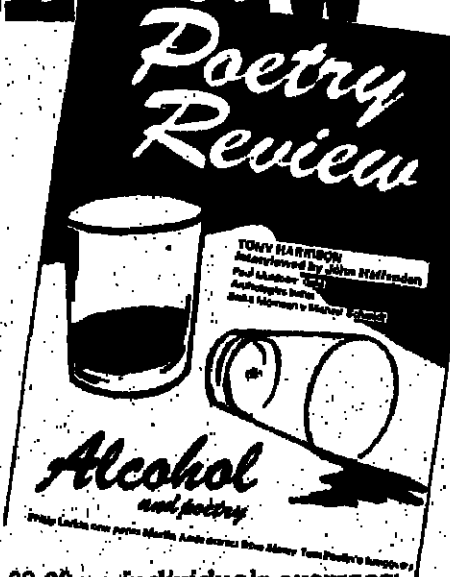
## POETRY REVIEW

Quarterly January 1984  
 a special supplement

### Alcohol

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## Hand-Shield in stucco

W. M. Bray

**MERLE GREENE ROBERTSON**  
*The Sculpture of Palenque: Volume 1, The Temple of the Inscriptions*  
115pp, plus 344 colour and black-and-white illustrations. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £108.40.  
0 691 03560 1

Palenque is neither the oldest nor the largest of the Maya cities, but by general consent it is the most beautiful. Its existence was first reported in 1773, and by 1786 Antonio del Rio was excavating there in search of gold and treasure. There is no record that he ever found any, and by today's standards his efforts did more harm than good. "By dint of perseverance", he wrote, "I effected all that was necessary to be done, so that ultimately there remained neither a window nor doorway blocked up, a partition that was not thrown down, nor a room, corridor, court, tower, nor subterranean passage in which excavations were not effected from two to three yards in depth." Subsequent visitors included most of the great names of nineteenth-century Maya exploration: Dupax, the self-styled Comte de Waldeck, Stephens and Catherwood, Charnay, Maler, and Alfred Percival Maudslay, whose magnificent illustrations of the sculpture and hieroglyphic inscriptions remained the standard work of reference until this first volume of *The Sculpture of Palenque*.

Strangely, Palenque was almost ignored during the early years of the twentieth century, a time of large-scale activity at other major sites, though popular interest revived in 1952 when the Mexican scholar Alberto Ruz made one of the most spectacular discoveries in the story of Mesoamerican archaeology. Deep inside the pyramid below the Temple of the Inscriptions he found a hidden tomb with a stone coffin containing the body of an old man and a wealth of jade ornaments. On the lid of the coffin was carved the life-sized figure of a Maya ruler on the point of descending into the realms of the Underworld, from which he would be reborn as a god. That, at least, is the orthodox view argued here by Merle Green Robertson, though the followers of Erich von Däniken will no doubt persist in their belief that the carving shows a space pilot in his cabin. For the rest of us the decipherment of the glyphic text on the sarcophagus has put the identification beyond dispute.

With the establishment of the archaeological sequence for the site by Robert and Barbara Rands, and the epigraphic research by members of the Palenque Round Table, we can now link the main periods of construction at the city with the history of its royal dynasty. The coffin inscription reveals that the tomb belongs to a ruler called Pacal, "Hand-Shield", who died in AD 683 at the age of eighty, after reigning for sixty-eight years during which Palenque rose to pre-eminence in the western lowlands. Since the decipherment of his name glyph in 1973,

King Pacal has joined Tutankhamun and Philip of Macedon on the list of distinguished archaeological corpses. It is logical, then, for this first volume to be a study of Pacal's temple and tomb. Four more volumes are promised: three dealing with the other buildings and monuments of the city, and a final volume of summary and discussion.

The aim of the series, writes Robertson, is "to combat the ravages of time by recording, before it is too late, every example of art and color from this one Maya city". Old photographs show how much damage the delicate stucco work has suffered already, and things can only get worse as the PEMEX oil wells pump their pollution into the atmosphere and the number of tourists rises every year (187,000 of them in 1977 alone). Predictably, Robertson and her colleagues have done a fine job. A good half of the book consists of plates and drawings showing every detail of the architectural decoration and the glyphic inscriptions. The illustrations are accompanied by interpretative descriptions for the specialist, and the scholarly apparatus of maps, tables, bibliography and index is all that the professional could wish.

But the book conveys enjoyment as well as information. Merle Robertson never forgets that Maya art was produced for a real world and not for a museum, and that behind these masterpieces there was a guiding human intelligence with which we can all identify. Thus, the raising of the stucco figures on pedestals is seen as a practical solution to the problem of keeping these figures in view from below, to a person approaching the temple at ground level and from a distance. Colour, too, was not arbitrary, but was coded to give symbolic information. Red was the colour of the animate world of human beings and living creatures; blue was the colour for things divine, royal or precious. Robertson describes the way in which the relief sculpture was built up, beginning with the outline drawing, then the armature, and finally the stucco modelling. The craftsman worked as if dressing a living personage. The nude body was modelled first, and then, in their correct order, the garments and jewellery. Sandals were placed on the feet, and each item of clothing was finished completely before the overlying garments or paraphernalia were added, even when the outer garments covered and concealed those underneath. Discussion ranges from the use of wooden forms (rather like movable type) for impressing glyphs into wet stucco, to the existence of lifelike portraiture, and the medical problems of the royal family: Pacal's club-foot, the hormone imbalance of the lady Resplendent Quetzal, and the six toes of Chan-Bahlum.

Throughout, the style remains quiet and sober, with no unnecessary jargon and no false drama. This is not in any way a popular book, but in a little over 100 pages it puts the colour back into those beautiful grey buildings, and makes the ruins of Palenque comprehensible in human terms. That's why every package tourist should read this book, and why it is so sad that, given its price, very few of them will.

## Holding our horses

Juliet Clutton-Brock

**J. SPRUYTTE**  
*Early Harness Systems: Experimental studies.*  
Translated by Mary Littauer  
125pp, £7. A. Allen. £10.  
0 85131 376 0

For many years the pages of the journal *Ambiguity* have been enlivened by discussions on ancient systems of harnessing horses. This book may, alas, put an end to much of the controversy for, by means of practical experiments carried out over a number of years, the author has established the facts about how ancient chariots were driven.

The principal argument is whether or not ancient systems of harnessing were so inefficient that the pressure of a throat-collar could almost strangle a horse when it was required to pull too heavy a load. It has even been suggested that the inadequacy of harness was the

basis for slavery in the ancient world and that it was not until the horse collar was invented in the Middle Ages that human power was replaced by horse power.

The experiments carried out by J. Spruytte on exact replicas of ancient chariots and their harness have demonstrated with precision the degree of efficiency of two-wheeled vehicles drawn by two or four horses harnessed abreast. The attention to detail and the craftsmanship that was put into the construction of the replicas has enabled the author to present an analysis of the different methods of traction used in Ancient Egypt, Classical Greece and Ancient China. This is a complicated subject for anyone not familiar with chariots and harness but the simple descriptions and excellent line-drawings and photographs make it as clear as possible. The text has been accurately translated from the French by Mary Littauer, who has an international reputation as an expert on the history of harness and this in itself gives the book a high recommendation.

## Earliest Hampshire

D. W. Harding

**BARRY CUNLIFFE**  
*Danebury: Anatomy of an Iron Age Hillfort*  
192pp, Batsford. £14.95.  
0 7134 09983

Excavations have been in progress at Danebury hillfort in Hampshire for fifteen years. Interim reports have appeared in archaeological journals, and a full account of the first ten years' work is currently in press. The present summary is aimed at a wider audience, though in the meantime it will equally afford a valuable overview of the site and its context for students and professional archaeologists.

To strike a balance between the wealth of archaeological detail which such a sustained campaign of fieldwork yields and the simplification required of a popular account is not easy. It was achieved with conspicuous success by Leslie Alcock a decade ago in his *Cadbury-Camelot*, for a hillfort with a similarly complex structural history, but reflecting only five years' excavation compared to Danebury's fifteen. In both cases, archaeologists must await the definitive reports before they can evaluate the stratigraphic evidence for structural phasing and ceramic sequences, and meanwhile must take on trust the main outline of the sites' history.

The design of Barry Cunliffe's *Danebury* is an attractive one, tracing the site's history in its local context from earliest times to the seventeenth century, with an extended account of its principal period of occupation in the pre-Roman Iron Age. The complexities of the site are outlined for the most part with clarity, and their significance persuasively assessed, though the momentum falters at times in discussion of the occupational sequence. The clearest demonstration of this comes in Chapter Six, where we are introduced for the first time to the stratigraphic sequence in the quarry ditches behind the ramparts, crucial to the phasing of the occupation of the interior. Phases g, h, i, and j are offered without explanation, and are not related to the structural periods 1-7 based on gates and ramparts, nor to ceramic phases 1-7, themselves not apparently coterminous, which are presented in Chapter Four. Elsewhere, the formulas Early-Late or Early, Middle, Late (a) and Late (b) are adopted, reinforcing the need for a summary chart with the necessary correlations. Given the impossibility of providing in a popular account all the supporting detail for such a complex sequence, one wonders whether it was wise to embark on anything more than a three-phase time sequence which reflects the normal extent of archaeological comprehension.

That the author is conscious of these problems is revealed by his nervous repetition when discussing the principal house-types. "Describing the arrangement is simple but explaining it is more difficult" (p 102) is a sentiment repeated on page 116. Interpretations which seem entirely plausible to this reviewer are considered perhaps "over-elaborate" (p100 and p110) or "far-fetched" (p100 and p104). In fact, the recovery of stake-wall and ring-groove roundhouses at Danebury - together with parallel work elsewhere - has done much to redress the bias imposed on Iron Age studies ever since the excavation of Little Woodbury in 1938-39.

A major achievement of the Danebury excavation has been the demonstration of its planned internal layout, with orderly disposition of pits, houses and granaries between a network of streets. Though less than half of the interior has been stripped so far, this has already resulted in information which could not have been inferred from the excavation of a smaller sample, and there must remain a measure of doubt about the decision taken at the end of ten seasons to excavate only 20 per cent of the pits uncovered thereafter. An example of the value of large-scale, if not total, excavation is the evidence from human and animal burials at Danebury. Hitherto, inhumations or partial remains of skeletons from hillfort or settlement excavations, if not in a recognizable context, have been regarded as the result of casual or irregular disposal of social outcasts or the like. At Danebury 100 pits, or 10 per cent



A nymph, possibly Supraba who came to earth to tempt ascetics; taken from Bali, The Split Gate to Heaven (129pp. Orbis. £12.50. 0 85613513 3).

of the total opened in the first ten years, contained human remains, including deliberate dismemberments and burials of selected bones, while 5 per cent contained complete animal burials, in circumstances indicative of a variety of ritual practices. Particularly intriguing is the occurrence of a number of ravens, a bird of ominous significance in Celtic literature and mythology.

A second major product of the Danebury programme will be its ceramic sequence, based upon the associations of several hundred pit-groups, and apparently reinforced by radio-carbon dating. The outline offered here seems to conform in general terms to the accepted typological sequence from haematite-coated bowls and coarse jars, through "saucerpan" pots and related forms with shallow-tooled ornament, to wheel-thrown wares in the final pre-Roman phase. How this sequence is subdivided, and how far the integrity of ceramic phases 1-7 is endorsed by carbon-14 dates remains to be seen in the definitive report, but it is hard to understand at this stage how limits of fifty or even 100 years for the phases outlined on p 66 can be sustained by the dates plotted on Figure 27, especially given the extreme irregularities of the current calibration curves for the later first millennium.

Finally, the scale of the Danebury excavation makes possible inferences regarding the economic and social structure of the site, based principally upon estimates of its grain storage capacity and potential for wool production, but including also, for example, evidence of its role in the redistribution of salt. In this section, the meaning of the histogram (Fig 74), which purports to show the relative age at death of the Danebury giant sheep (or are they dwarf cattle?), will be totally obscure to the general reader who is unfamiliar with the use of "age stages" instead of months or years in the vertical scale, but the general message is clear. A particular achievement of the Danebury exercise is the intensive air and ground survey of the adjacent landscape, which provides a unique opportunity to study the functioning of hillfort in context, and affords an archaeological basis for the social models tentatively advanced in Chapter Nine. The use of early Irish and classical sources may not satisfy those who prefer to study European protohistory in terms of Marxist economics and modern anthropological theory, but is doubtless due to the fact that the author, as the dustjacket explains, besides being director of the Danebury excavation, also earns a crust as Professor of European Archaeology at Oxford, where archaeology, mercifully, is not just synonymous with palaeosociology.

## Association of arts

J. Mordaunt Crook

**SUSAN BEATTIE**  
*The New Sculpture*  
272pp, with black-and-white illustrations.  
Yale University Press. £30.  
0 3002 8660 1

"Sculpture is the voice of architecture," C. R. Cockerell's dictum might stand as an epigraph to the latest sumptuous volume from the Paul Mellon Centre and Yale University Press. For the principal theme of Susan Beattie's *The New Sculpture* is the emancipation of English sculpture between the 1870s and the 1890s: emancipation from the restricting conventions of Neo-Classicism, thanks to the integration of sculpture with architectural design and decoration during successive late Victorian revivals, Queen Anne, mixed Renaissance and Baroque. Dr Beattie sums up as follows:

Architects and sculptors were united during the last decades of the nineteenth century by their longing to express a personal and unique identity. Among architects this need was commonly rationalised as a determination to develop a specifically 'modern' style, to broaden and sharpen observation of past tradition and to make it seem relevant to the present day. . . . Sculptors too began to see the historical development of their art in a new light and found, in the quattrocento, justification for their own search beyond received notions of classical beauty for the expression of 'self'.

Such objectives were the antithesis of Neo-Classicism. Neo-Classical sculpture operated on mimetic rather than expressive principles. Its object was abstraction rather than identity. The only way to become great, Winckelmann had written, "is to imitate antiquity" - imitation, of course, implying not plagiarism but distillation. These were the views of the Professor of Sculpture at the Royal Academy between 1868 and 1876, Henry Weekes. He had worked with Chantrey, and Flaxman was his idol. In his lectures at the Academy Schools he maintained the ideals of Neo-Classicism right through the High Victorian period: gravity, abstraction, clarity, repose and above all a "moral or 'universal' beauty - Not for flimsy familiarity, the domesticity or the mysticism of the Pre-Raphaelites; still less the passionate realism of Michelangelo. For example, Weekes believed that Michelangelo's "David" carried truth "to the point which becomes offensive, which destroys the elegance of the statue, and conveys the idea of rude fact instead of abstract truth". It was against such shibboleths as these that the New Sculptors - Alfred Gilbert, Harry Bates, George Frampton, Hamo Thornycroft, Alfred Drury, Onslow Ford, Frederick Pomeroy - set up their standard of rebellion. Shrugging off stereotyped allegories, they set out to explore the mysteries of the human psyche through the medium of symbolist imagery. "When art languishes", wrote Victor Hugo, "a return to nature is prescribed." Alfred Stevens had been the movement's "morning star", calling in Italy to dilute the dominance of Greece. When Frederick Leighton became President of the Royal Academy in 1878, the Neo-Classical enemy was in full retreat. And when Alfred Gilbert - Rodin's "English Cellini" - was eventually elected to the long-vacant Chair of Sculpture in 1900, the revolution was complete. In the endless dialogue between classic and romantic impulses, Romanticism had scored another victory.

French masters, notably Daubigny and Mercier, may have provided inspiration, but it was the mundane work of architectural decoration which supplied the route by which these late Victorian sculptors managed to escape the Neo-Classical stranglehold. "The drifting apart of Architecture, Painting and Sculpture", Lethaby explained in 1883, "is shown on the one hand in the trade decorations of our buildings; on the other in the subject painting and portrait sculpture of our Galleries. But any art-revival can only be on the lines of the Unity of the Aesthetic Arts." "It seems to me" time has arrived when perhaps the introduction of a little architectural vaccine in the arms of the sculptor, and the influence of a little sculpture's blood in the veins of the architect might produce a mongrel sculptor-architect or, at the best, a sculptor of a distinctly strong breed."

And integration had to be total if it were to be fruitful. "It is not enough", contended Henry Wilson, "to have panels to fill and fringes to flounder in; the sculptor ought to be in at the very birth of the building and advise on the arrangement of the mass and the distribution of light and shade." In 1897 Alfred Waterhouse - always a safe barometer of taste - summed up the now established view: "In the highest periods of art the best sculpture was undoubtedly associated with the best architecture."

So, while architects progressed from the Queen Anne Revival to what Goodhart-Rendel christened "Bric-à-brac Renaissance", and thence from Imperial Baroque to European Beaux-Arts, the New Sculptors made good use of their new opportunities. "The transformation of architectural carving and modelling", argues Beattie, "from anonymous, scarcely noticed craft to dynamic, seductive art was the greatest collective achievement of the New Sculptors and one of the most rational expressions of Arts and Crafts ideals in 19th-c. history." Harry Bates's flowing terracotta friezes at Hill's Bakery, 60 Buckingham Gate, Westminster (designed by Thomas Verity, 1887, demolished 1980); Hamo Thornycroft's epoch-making panels at the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Moorgate Place, City of London (designed by John Belcher and A. Beresford Pite, 1888-93); Alfred Drury's colossal groups in stone at the War Office, Whitehall (designed by William and Clyde Young, 1898-1905) - all these demonstrated not only individual virtuosity but that expansion of the functional boundaries of sculpture which was one of the principal aims of the whole movement.

Alas, it was a movement which disintegrated at exactly the point which should have marked its culmination: the decoration of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Intended to represent the apotheosis of the unity between architecture and sculpture, Aston Webb's uncoordinated colossal succeeded only in turning the statues along Brompton Road into "ornaments on a mantelpiece". By the turn of the century, in fact, architecture and sculpture were once again heading in different directions. The strange, chrysephantine marvels produced by Bates, Frampton and Reynolds-Stephens - "Lania" (1899), "Mysteriarch" (1892), "Mors Janua Vitae" (1899), "Guinevere's Redeeming" (1900) - were worlds apart from Aston Webb's Imperial vision. And nothing could look more anomalous than Pomeroy's baroque figure of "Architecture" (1905)

## Frozen facets

Reyner Banham

**FRED ANDERES and ANN AGRANOFF**  
*Ice Palaces*  
132pp, with 50 colour and 100 black-and-white illustrations. New York: Abbeville Press.  
\$29.95 (paperback \$16.95).  
0 89659 391 6

What must have sounded like a good idea - a marvellous idea - has gone wrong in *Ice Palaces*. The title conjures up irresistible fairy-tale visions of glittering architectural fantasies in landscapes of ethereal white, and the dust-jacket illustration and the frontispiece sustain the promise. But hardly anything else does; against all odds, it must seem, the authors have contrived to produce a pretty dull book.

Part of the trouble is in the writing, for which an old-fashioned adjective would be "exorable". Chapters and sections often begin with passages as bad as:

The year 1894 was a time of trouble in some parts of the world; China and Japan went to war; Captain of Alfred Dreyfus was unjustly convicted of treason in France; and 20,000 unemployed workers marched on Washington. In Quebec, however, it was the year of "the most remarkable Carnival of the nineteenth century . . ."

and the prose is everywhere laboured and curiously disappointed. The text seems to cover the subject fairly thoroughly. Diligent research has clearly gone into amassing the material, but equally clearly there proved not to be very much of it, so Fred Andres and Ann Agranoff have crammed it all in, from the Empress Anna's glacial wed-

pinned uncomfortably to the steel rivets of Vauxhall Bridge. By 1906 the building boom was over and Edwardian Baroque had reached its peak. By 1910 architects had begun to lose faith in Arts and Crafts ideals and in the possibility of developing a genuinely "free" style through a synthesis of historic forms. Beaux-Arts classicism and steel-framed construction, as well as the dictates of economy, had begun to make autonomous sculptural decoration seem unnecessary and even irrelevant. Clearly the balance of taste was about to swing once more: down with romantic expressionism; up with the rationalist ethic of the Modern Movement.

In grappling with the elusive aesthetics of figurative sculpture, Beattie seizes upon one of Coleridge's more enigmatic dicta: "a great mind must be androgynous." Coleridge had been quoted by Walter Shaw Sparrow in 1901 *vis à vis* George Frampton's "St Mungo" (1897-1901) at Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum: "To put the truth plainly, Mr Frampton has here achieved that fine harmony of masculine and feminine qualities which ought always to be present in the work done by an artist of genius, for the reason that genius itself is neither masculine nor feminine, but each and both . . . [unlike] the neuter style of Beardsley." There is certainly something bisexual at the root of symbolist art: Gilbert's statuettes on the Clarence tomb at Windsor (1899 etc), are a notable example. Hence the difficulty of expressing symbolist ideas through the medium of the nude; hence too the disintegrative impact of *fin de siècle* sensuality on the New Sculpture as a unified movement. "Sexual polarisation", notes Beattie, "curiously and mercifully in abeyance in England during the last decades of the 19th c., had by 1905 already begun the 'fatal' erosion of aesthetic values that Virginia Woolf was to describe and abominate during the 1920s." At this point the 'Australian-born sculptor Bertram Mackennal is introduced as the villain of the piece: his "Dawn of a New Age" (1924) is certainly as assertively masculine as his vanished ten-foot bronze "For she sitteth on a seat in the high places of the city" (1894) is neurotically feminine. But this "polarising" tendency is visible in others too: compared with Alfred Drury's subtly languorous "Evening" (1898), Charles Hartwell's "Dawn" (1900-14) seems precariously close to pornography. Of course, little of this emerges in the writings of the sculptors themselves. Indeed nineteenth-century sculptors were hardly noted for their theorizing. "The fact is", explained Frederick Pomeroy

in 1898, "that to put into writing anything pertaining to one's art is more difficult than making a statue."

Nothing illustrates more vividly the changing status of the New Sculpture among cognoscenti than the curious story of Onslow Ford's monument to Lord Strathairn. Commissioned in 1891, and paid for by a public subscription of £3,500, Ford's equestrian bronze was set up in 1895 at the junction of Knightsbridge and Brompton Road. Thirty-six years later it was removed during the construction of Knightsbridge underground station and placed in store. There it remained for another thirty-six years, something of an embarrassment to its custodians. Meanwhile, taste changed again. In 1968 newspaper protests forced Lord Strathairn back into the public eye. His statue was sold to a private collector, and now it stands - oddly imperious - in a sylvan setting in Hampshire.

Other statues have been less fortunate. The eclipse of the New Sculpture between the wars - indeed until the pioneering work of Lavinia Handley-Read in the 1960s - has consigned many a prize-winning piece to oblivion. Where is George Frampton's winsome "Christabel" (1889)? Or his haunting bas-relief, "My Thoughts are my Children" (1894)? Where is Pomeroy's "Pensée" (1895)? Or Pegrarn's "Fortune" (1900)? Or Fehr's "St George and the Rescued Maiden" (1898)? Where, for that matter, is Alfred Drury's enigmatic "Prophesies of Fate" (1899)? Or Harry Bates's sad-eyed "Rhodope" (1877)? All these, alas, and others too, continue to bear the label PLU (Present Location Unknown).

Beattie's enthusiasm for her subject makes her perhaps too selective. She avoids, for example, dealing with the movement's declining years: Drury's unimpressive "Reynolds" in the courtyard of Burlington House (1931); Frampton's saccharine "Peter Pan" (1910) in Kensington Gardens; the same sculptor's starchy "Edith Cavell" (1920); or those anaemic lions (1914) at the south entrance to the British Museum. She is too hard on the rapid conventions of Neo-Classicism, and not hard enough on the febrile excesses of some of the New Sculptors. She omits altogether any discussion of Gothic Revival or Pre-Raphaelite sculpture: its influence, negatively or positively, on what came afterwards deserves some consideration. Even so, there are riches here. The illustrations are well chosen. The index is admirable. The text is as carefully wrought as a Gilbert statuette. In short, there is little or nothing for professional nitpickers.

revert grimly to the same old model, at least in St Paul, Minnesota, which is still the place that comes to most American minds when ice-palaces are mentioned (at least in my hearing). And such calling to mind is nearly always linked to some commentary on the dullness of the work.

One has to conclude that the founders of the stylistic dynasty had little sense of the optical qualities that could be achieved in building with such a material. Only one illustration, a splendid pair of stereoscopes of an arched entrance to the St Paul palace of 1887, gives any idea of how magical the effect of this green-candy translucency - a masonry construction apparently glowing with inner light - could be. That one picture sets a standard - photographic and architectural - by which the rest of the book fails. Until, that is, one comes to the Japanese work for the Sapporo Snow Festivals from 1950 onwards (which also provide the cover and frontispiece illustrations) and suddenly, in proper pantomime manner, there is a transformation scene. Modern colour photography and modern artificial lighting reveal a visual sensibility that understands the potential of building in ice. Even when the palaces imitate fairly dull Western buildings, this Japanese work has an air of transparent fantasticality that even the most recent North American work still lacks. Without Sapporo, the book would simply be an antiquarian record of down-home folkways; with Sapporo, it frustratingly suggests promising ideas, for architecture and for a book, that never really got off the snowy ground.

58.11.1984



# In pursuit of intimacy

Paula Neuss

**PETER DRONKE**  
*Woman Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua to Marguerite Perote*  
338pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50 (paperback, £10.95). 0521 255805

According to the Wife of Bath, if medieval women had written stories "They wolde han writen of men moore wikkedness / Than al the mark of Adam may redresse", but of course, she implies, men have made sure that women don't know how to write, so as to protect themselves. To the multiple ironies in Chaucer's portrayal of this "liberated" woman we can now, thanks to Peter Dronke, add a new one: there were in fact many women, from Perpetua onwards, who could write, and very few of them seem to have intentionally written anything about the wickedness of men. Perpetua and Marguerite Perote were both put to death for their beliefs: Perpetua's father tries to persuade her to recant, veering from violence ("he bore down upon me as if he would pluck out my eyes") to blackmail ("have pity on my white hairs") but she sees all this as being done out of devotion; Marguerite, a mystic, presents an erotic picture of divine love in which, among more blissful things, the soul imagines a series of cruel tests by her lover, "torments that she would gladly accept if they were her beloved's will".

The assumption that medieval women couldn't write has been widely held. "Distinguished older scholars" suggested, for example, that Hrotsvitha's works were a hoax: that Hildegard of Bingen's vast output must have been composed by her male secretaries; that St Jerome wrote the letters tracked by his protégées Paula and Eustochium; that the "poetic reply" of Constance (a young eleventh-century nun) was fabricated by her lover; that Héloïse's third letter was written by Abelard. Mr Dronke shows that these women were indeed the authors of what they said they wrote, and were often influential. Although Héloïse was twenty years younger than Abelard, he may have learned from her: "it would seem that Abelard assimilated to quite an extent Héloïse's habit in the epistolary style, rather than the other way round". Dronke thinks that his discovery may cause scholars "surprise or even alarm" but I suspect there are many female scholars who will not be at all surprised by it.

These women tried to find a personal style in which to express their intimate thoughts and feelings. Until about the middle of the twelfth century Latin was *de rigueur*, and when women tried to escape its rigidity, and the rhetorical rules of composition, they would be accused of writing badly when they were simply trying to say what they meant. The Carolingian *Dhuoda* (born about 803) wrote unconventional Latin "because she was urgently striving to say something in her own way, something that was truly hers". Desperately lonely, abandoned by her husband who took their baby with him, she wrote a handbook for her other, sixteen-year-old son, in which she tried to express her love and longing through experiments with form and style, even playing with the rules of grammar to show how they mirror relationships.

If you love them in the singular, they will love you in the plural: it is written in the *Art* (of Grammar) of the poet Donatius: "I love you and am loved by you, I kiss you and am kissed by you."

On the other hand, women could write according to the rule-book if they chose. Hrotsvitha "modestly" refers in her prefaces to her feminine inability to compose verses correctly, but the suggestion that writing in classical metres is especially hard for women because they are frail is deliberately preposterous and is said tongue-in-cheek. Hrotsvitha did not have to imitate Terence: Dronke also rescues Hrotsvitha from the dry scholars who consider that she could not have intended her plays for performance. It seems inconceivable that anybody, even a tenth-century canoness, should have composed a large number of plays without hoping that one or two would be staged. Hrotsvitha came from a cultured milieu, as inevitably did most of the women whose writ-

ing Dronke discusses. Where there are hints of the thoughts and feelings of unlettered women these have been written by men. The testimony of Grazia Lizer of Montailou was taken down by the official inquisitor, but some of her character comes through "the painfully awkward Latin of the official record" and Grazia's comments on her joy and lack of guilt in love-making with Pierre Clergue (though she was married and he was the rector) contrast alarmingly with the painful ecstasies described by a mystic such as Angela of Foligno "undressing before the sculpture of Christ so as to offer her body to him" or Hildegard of Bingen's attempt to project a "wholly positive theology of sex" while presumably knowing little about it in practice.

Since most women wrote in the shadow of the Church's teaching, the surviving writings by "secular" women such as the Provençal *troubaditz* are especially interesting. Dronke compares the image they project to that of Bardot in *Et Dieu créa la femme* as discussed by Simone de Beauvoir – that of a woman who expresses her desires openly and chooses her

man. In the most striking of their poems, however (a discussion about love and marriage between three women which foreshadows Dunbar), it is not desire so much as disgust at the results of having children (pendulous breasts and wrinkled belly) that emerges. The *troubaditz* come closest to emancipation in their writing, yet ironically in a poem by a Provençal Lesbian, Biers, "diction and outlook are hard to distinguish from those of men's poetry".

As Dronke observes, the number of studies of "medieval women" goes on increasing, but "the greater part of what survives by medieval women has remained virtually unknown". This is partly because of the inaccessibility of texts, and it is a rare person who can not only track down the material, in medieval Latin, Provençal, Anglo-Norman or whatever, but also read it with careful attention and then translate it so that other people can appreciate it. This must be one of the best books on women's writing. Mr Dronke is like the Chaucer who took such pains, in his *Legend of Good Women*, to write in the service of women, literature, elegance and wit.



The letters "m" by "E.S.", an artist-engraver working in Germany and the Low Countries in the mid-fifteenth century, taken from Ornamental Alphabets and Initials by Alison Harding (96pp. Thames and Hudson. £4.95. 0500 273138).

## Missing the hoof-beats

D. D. R. Owen

**C. H. SISSON (Translator)**  
*The Song of Roland*  
135pp. Manchester: Carcanet Press. £7.95. 0 85635 421 X

In my review of C. H. Sisson's *Song of Roland* as broadcast on Radio 3 (TLS, November 3, 1982) I commented on various inaccurate or inappropriate renderings and regretted above all the undermining of the epic's essential dignity on the levels of both sense and sound. The printed version shows minor differences from the radio script (not always in the interests of accuracy – Marsile's offer of ten or twenty hostages has become a munificent ten or twenty thousand!) and is prefaced by a succinct introduction to both legend and poem and by some observations on the principles of translation.

Choices, not rules, face the translator of a masterpiece from a long-dead genre; and for the *Roland* I see three basic alternatives. There is the literal prose rendering, useful as a "crib", but sacrificing most of the vital acoustic dimension. Then there is "modernization", which subordinates accuracy to interpretation, transposing the work into a modern idiom and perhaps into a form such as drama more accessible to our dulled powers of reception. Most challenging is the attempt to re-create to the highest possible degree the original experience, feeding not the mind alone, but also the inner ear, with echoes of the verse's majestic music.

Sisson's solution is a compromise. He rightly rejects "a garbled and sham antique language, which no one ever spoke". On the other hand, he sometimes goes to the opposite extreme by slipping in quite inappropriate

modern colloquialism: Roland, addressing Oliver as "old son"; Charlemagne being "not quick to use his mouth" in council, whereas a pagan, less reticent, "now talks big about what he'll do / To the old country: slap her down . . .". This I find no less disturbing than contrived archaisms.

As for the form, Sisson says there can be no question of imitating that of the *Chanson*. Why? "The classic line in French is of twelve syllables, and it is this which corresponds to the classic English line of ten syllables. The ten-syllable line in French is a *short* line, and the nearest equivalent in English is the line of eight syllables. A great deal more of the speed of the original . . . is lost by ignoring this point." So he uses "a basic octosyllabic couplet, not however counting on my fingers for every line". The choice is unfortunate and based on a misconception.

The Old French epic decasyllable is not a short line when compared with the octosyllabic couplet favoured by most other genres, including the romance, fabliau and comic theatre. With its regular 4 + 6 beat and room for formulaic orchestration, it was more capable than the tripping octosyllable of stirring epic emotions. Paradoxically, the shorter line can even slow the pace, as poet or translator resorts to padding to achieve rhythm or rhyme. Thus a single French decasyllable becomes with Sisson: "You Frankish knights," says the emperor / And rather pointedly ignores / The archbishop . . ." (the words I italicize correspond to nothing in the original).

The *Roland* is so highly crafted that adequate translation is impossible; and even when reading it in the twelfth-century French, we are still left to imagine the experience of a living performance. In this version we catch too seldom the thrilling pulse of the work: the hoof-beats and the heart-beats.

## Signs of tension

Denton Fox

**ELIZABETH SALTER**  
*Fourteenth-Century English Poetry: Contexts and Readings*  
Edited by Derek Pearsall and Nicolette Zeeman  
224pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £19.50. 0 19811186 X

Elizabeth Salter's editors explain that she began this book in about 1972, and then four years before her death in 1980 started to rewrite completely the opening chapters. This volume is drawn from the original version; the editors hope to bring out the rewritten chapters later. As it stands, the book does not have much cohesion: the first three chapters are on social, literary and intellectual history; the last two give close readings of Chaucerian texts; and the fourth chapter, patched together from a section on alliterative poems and a section on Langland, is intended to serve as a bridge.

In the first part, Professor Salter sketches a medieval England that was cosmopolitan rather than provincial, and more catholic in its literary tastes than is generally believed. She demonstrates how frequently alliterative and non-alliterative verse are together in the same manuscript, and how similar the two sorts of verse often are in their subject-matter – though I am not sure that this justifies her conclusion that "medieval readers were . . . less interested than present-day critics in taking note of the distinctions between alliterative and non-alliterative writing". And Chaucer's "respect" for alliterative verse seems to me unproved, even if too much importance may have been placed on his parson's sneer at it. Salter is surely right in stressing both the importance of French in England, and the fact that many people were mobile, but at the end one is left thinking wistfully that there must have been some people who stayed at home and spoke English.

The emphasis in the second part is on diversity. Salter does not believe that the great poets of the late fourteenth century can be usefully related to each other, and she does not find much coherence in many of their individual poems. The strength of this section comes from her deep feelings for the tensions of that age: "sentiments of protest, dissent, revolt were often held in uneasy balance with those of acquiescence and conformity". *Piers Plowman* is the poem she is the most in sympathy with, and she has some fine pages on it, pages almost good enough to make one accept her claim that it is "the greatest vernacular poem of the later Middle Ages". However, her long attempt to rehabilitate the *Venus* of the *Parlement of Foules* ("No breath of criticism disturbs the scene . . .") is not likely to win much assent, even among the staunchest anti-Robertsonian. One should applaud such a pro-Venerian and anti-establishment undertaking, but the text will simply not support it.

The last chapter, on "The Knight's Tale", shows a return to form. As with the *Parlement of Foules*, Salter pays careful attention to the Boccaccian source, but here she argues, to better effect, that Chaucer's meaning is far different from Boccaccio's. She conveys admirably the desolation of the tale. Where some may part company from her is with her treatment of the end. Her conclusion (roughly the same one arrived at in her small book of 1962 on the Knight's and Clerk's Tales) is that Theseus' long Boethian speech is a Chaucerian evasion: "it is not so easy to describe [Chaucer's] methods . . . as both skilful and entirely scrupulous". Some people, perhaps most, find Theseus' speech entirely satisfactory; I do not, and I think Professor Salter's statement of its effects is precisely accurate: one of the most interesting paradoxes of the *Knight's Tale* [is] that that Boethian sections of Theseus' speech, by which Chaucer sought so strenuously to blur the outlines of a bleak story, worked to throw an even clearer light upon its bleak nature." But could this clearer light not be what Chaucer intended? It is, after all, Theseus' speech, not Chaucer's; it is the best answer that the farthest-seeing mortal in the tale can give to the problems of the world, and the point is that it is not a satisfactory answer.

## Affecting the situation

Sarah Waterlow

**R. W. SHARPLES**  
*Alexander of Aphrodisias on Fate*  
310pp. Duckworth. £24. 07155 1585 0

This book is an important contribution to the history of philosophy. Alexander of Aphrodisias' treatise on fate is a record of major confrontation between two of the great intellectual systems of antiquity, the Aristotelian and the Stoic. The question at issue is that of freedom and determinism. Alexander (second-third century AD), possibly the greatest of the ancient commentators on Aristotle, was also himself a devoted Aristotelian. In the *De Fato*, written while he was head of the Peripatetic school at Athens, he sets out to refute, on Aristotelian principles, the Stoic doctrine that "all things come to be of necessity and by fate". His arguments are wide-ranging, vigorous and closely analytical. For these qualities, as well as for its historical importance, this work deserves the wider interest R. W. Sharples's new edition is certain to attract. We have now a reliable translation of *De Fato* and related extracts from Alexander's other writings, together with a commentary and a historical introduction. These are lucid, informative and very thoroughly documented. The volume also contains a photographic reproduction of Bruns's text, Dr Sharples's notes on this text, a select bibliography six pages long, an *Index locorum* and a general index. Specialists on Alexander and the Stoics will find this an invaluable compendium of relevant scholarship.

From its title, the *De Fato* might seem to promise little of interest to philosophers today: the idea of "fate", which suggests a non-moral superhuman agency, is seldom a serious topic in contemporary discussions of determinism. The focus now is on the idea that every event is the product of some set or other of natural conditions whose characters and connections are discoverable by science. The Stoics, on the other hand, were led to determinism from their semi-religious vision of the universe as permeated by a single, eternal, active principle expressing itself in every event. This they called "fate" and also "God". But they also defended the position with arguments of kinds more familiar to us: as for instance that "every movement has a cause". One thing, however, is common to all forms of determinism: they seem to make nonsense of morality and law. It is with this apparent consequence that Alexander is chiefly concerned, and many of his arguments could be aptly used in a twentieth-century context. Indeed, many are.

It seems absurd to tell someone "That was your fault" while claiming that there was never any possibility that it would not happen. But the Stoics, like many modern determinists, tried to show that there is no contradiction in fact: we can believe in universal necessity without being logically obliged to abandon our ordinary beliefs concerning human responsibility. Alexander contends, in effect, that the first impression was sound; these are irreconcilable positions. He argues at length and in detail that those who claim the contrary cannot support their claim except by distorting the meanings of the key terms.

Alexander succeeds in raising a number of serious difficulties for anyone wishing to maintain that a world in which everything happens of necessity would have room in it for moral agents such as we take ourselves to be. But one of his most prominent lines of attack is likely to seem questionable to modern readers. He argues that if everything were to happen of necessity, human effort and planning would never make any difference to the course of events – adding the consideration that even if that were not so obviously absurd as it is, the disastrous practical effects of accepting such a view of life would be reason enough for rejecting any theory that entails it. But it is hard to see the force of the argument. The proposition that everything comes about of necessity does not entail that human will makes no difference. Such "no-thing" fatalism is not a consequence of determinism. For instance, modern determinists typically regard a human decision as giving rise to changes which had not otherwise taken place. The decision is the effect of earlier causes, true, but

is also itself a cause of further effects. And Alexander himself describes his opponents' view in similar terms: nothing occurs that is not a link in a causal chain (the metaphor is a Stoic one) stretching endlessly in both temporal directions. Against this, he appears to have no effective reply. Just when he needs to substantiate his own claim that the decision (if really a decision, or of real moral significance) cannot itself be necessitated, he falls back on the seemingly irrelevant protest that it does affect what happens.

But it would be historically short-sighted to dismiss this simply as confused thinking. Perhaps for us there is no essential connection between the idea (i) that an event B is the necessary effect of a prior cause, A, and the idea (ii) that B's own outcome, C, would have occurred just the same even without B, so that B makes no difference. That is because we hold, in general, a non-purposive view of causality. The physical sciences have seen to that – sciences undreamt of by Alexander. But for an Aristotelian philosopher, an efficient cause, in the model case, is an agent (not necessarily intelligent or even conscious) which sets in train a process directed towards some definite outcome; and the intermediate stages are to be explained as brought about by the agent in order that the outcome be realized. According to this way of thinking, it is quite possible that where B is causally intermediate between A and the outcome C, the latter would have been realized even in the absence of B; for the prior cause, A, being purposive, might – and if powerful, would – have brought about C by some other means. Such adaptiveness is the hallmark of purpose.

Thus in a sense it is a matter of indifference whether or not B occurs, and when the Stoics suggested that a human decision is in every case an intermediate link in a chain stretching back beyond the human individual's control, Alexander's charge of fatalism, though narrowly based, was not inconsequential. To Aristotelian eyes, that Stoic picture portrays the decision as a means or instrument whereby some non-human agent (whether natural, or supernatural) does not affect the argument achieves an effect which it would surely have achieved in some other way (if *per impossibile*) the person had decided differently or not at all. Even now, unsophisticated people ask, when confronted with determinism, not only: "But how then is it ever right to punish anyone?" but also, often enough: "So then what difference can we ever make?" as if these objections have a single ground and single target. Is it clear that the naïve questioners are using, ineptly, a conception of causality such as philosophers now favour; or are they, like Alexander, operating coherently with a more primitive and, it may be, a more natural concept?

## Crofter's Wife

She walks through the village  
carrying her messages from the Co-op;  
the mice are burrowing through the walls,  
the rats gnaw the potatoes

which her heart-stricken husband has gathered  
in the haze of autumn . . .  
sweat in beads on his forehead  
black dirt on his hands.

Prices are going up  
year after year,  
soon even the harmless daffodil  
will be valued in gold.

Her husband has a head like a turnip  
with the dirt adhering to it,  
the ground bubbles with the costs  
that the furrow must pay.

The bag grows heavier and heavier.  
The girls are rotating  
anonymously behind the counter  
like fresh innamenable stars.

IAN CRICHTON SMITH

## Individual instances

John Marenbon

**EDWARD BOOTH**  
*Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers*  
314pp. Cambridge University Press. £35. 0521 252547

Edward Booth has written a book not only unfailing in its intelligence and remarkable in its scholarship, but also of far wider importance than its title might suggest. It studies the influence which Aristotelian ontology had on thinkers up to the thirteenth century – a story of creative misunderstanding which involves a reassessment of the links between antique, Islamic and medieval Christian philosophy, and of the complex, interconnected heritage of Plato and Aristotle within these traditions.

Father Booth describes Aristotle's ontology as "aporetic" because it explores, but does not attempt to resolve, a central difficulty: reality, Aristotle believes, is made up of individual things (and not, for instance, Platonic Ideas); but knowledge must begin from universals. Aristotle tackled the problem repeatedly (especially in *Metaphysics* III and VII), sometimes considering individuals as individuals, sometimes rather as instances of a universal. Neither emphasis was intended to be definitive. Booth argues that none of Aristotle's successors was content, like him, to leave the problem unsolved, its very intractability an initiation to the subject-matter of his ontology. In the third century AD, Alexander of Aphrodisias, commentator and systematizer of Aristotle, asserted the primacy of individuals with few of the qualifications found in the *Metaphysics*. This "radical Aristotelianism" enjoyed a revival in late antiquity, among thinkers such as John Philoponus and, in parts of his work, Boethius. By contrast, Neoplatonists like Porphyry and Proclus, encouraged by Aristotle's aporetic hesitations, attempted to fit Aristotelian logic within a metaphysical scheme in which universals had ontological priority. Despite translations of Neoplatonic material into Arabic, Booth considers that Islamic thinkers from the time of Alfarabi (780–795) adopted the radical Aristotelian approach to ontology. Neither Avicenna (980–1037) nor Averroes (1126–98) was aware of Aristotle's aporetic method, although the contradictions with which it deals are not entirely excluded from their discussions.

The thirteenth-century Christian philosophers Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas were heirs to this Islamic tradition. They tried, Booth believes, to reconcile this inheritance, not simply with Christianity, but with a mainly Neoplatonic tradition of Christian thought, represented by Augustine, parts of Boethius

and the pseudo-Dionysius. Albert's method was to accommodate an Aristotelian view of genera and species within a metaphysical view of emanation, discussed very often in metaphors of light. Aquinas, developing an idea modified from Proclus by the pseudo-Dionysius, argued that essence is communicated wholly and separately to each individual. He was consequently able to maintain a radical Aristotelian position on universals, without (Booth believes) incurring the problems which had given rise to Aristotle's original *aporia*.

Booth's detailed analyses of the many thinkers he discusses reflect the sureness of grasp which comes from a coherent, clear and yet subtle grasp of his theme as a whole. Sometimes he persuasively challenges commonly held views, as when he argues that it was not Platonism which Averroes sought to remove from Avicenna's reading of Aristotle, but rather the distortions introduced by an over-enthusiastic attempt at systematic clarity. Sometimes he brings perspective and precision to areas which other scholars have left vague. Aquinas' Platonism has been much discussed in recent years, but hardly ever as accurately defined, both textually and analytically; the Aristotelian elements in the thought of Neoplatonists like Porphyry, Proclus and the pseudo-Dionysius are presented sharply and succinctly; and the pages dealing with Boethius' uncertainty over his ontology are far more philosophically penetrating than even the best of recent specialized studies.

A book of such quality and importance provokes many queries: one of these concerns its subject-matter; another, its method. Booth devotes a short section to the ninth-century philosopher John Scotus (Eriugena). He leaves aside other Latin thinkers of the eighth to twelfth centuries, because he believes that they did not deal in any interesting ways with the material of Aristotle's aporetic ontology. It is indeed true that none of these thinkers had direct access to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. But it might be argued that, through Aristotle's logic, Boethius' logical commentaries and *Opuscula sacra* and the pseudo-Dionysian corpus, twelfth-century writers were introduced to exactly the problems about individuals and universals which had troubled Aristotle; and that they discussed them imaginatively and seriously. In particular, Gilbert of Poitiers anticipates aspects of Aquinas' ontological theory. Perhaps the elements which thirteenth-century scholastics had to syncretize were even more diverse than Booth suggests. But were Albert the Great and Aquinas merely, or primarily, syncretists? Booth portrays them as thinkers of great power, concerned to reconcile diverse philosophical theories which threatened the very stability of Christian intellectual life by their apparent conflict. The urgency of this task seems – on Booth's account – to have left them little time for reflection on philosophical problems as opposed to philosophers' positions. Is this impression justified? Both medieval thinkers propose systems; but it is easy, when emphasizing the systematic coherence of their thought, to do less than justice to its depth. In Aquinas, at least, philosophical difficulties are frequently examined with the same awareness of complexity as in Aristotle. But this is manifest, not in a failure to reach conclusions, but through tensions between treatments of the same complexes of problems from different points of view. Booth's exclusive concentration on the ontological aspect of the questions he raises tends to hide this side of Aquinas. St Thomas also discusses the relation of the individual to the universal in connection with the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language. Each of Aquinas' arguments has the appearance of conclusiveness, but there are gaps and contradictions in the treatment as a whole which make it more aporetic than systematic. There is therefore room to query Booth's conclusion that "Aristotelian aporetic ontology died with Aristotle", but none to doubt the fascination and importance of his book for every student of medieval philosophy.

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# Attacking the ultimate

Brian Pippard

S. CHANDRASEKHAR  
Eddington: The most distinguished  
astrophysicist of his time  
64pp. Cambridge University Press. £7.50.  
0521 257468

The subtitle quotes nearly as distinguished a contemporary of Eddington's at the time of his death; and S. Chandrasekhar, one of this year's Nobel Laureates in physics, does not dispute the tribute in the centenary lectures he delivered at Trinity College, Cambridge, and which he has enlarged somewhat for publication.

No one who knows anything about Professor Chandrasekhar will expect an insubstantial act of piety, and indeed any account of Eddington that omitted serious discussion of his work would be of little interest. Beyond his great original contributions to astrophysics and Relativity, the monographs which stand as his memorial and the popular books of the 1920s and 30s which turned many a young head towards science (for, like Goldsmith, he wrote like an angel), Eddington's life was not full of incident, except perhaps for the vigorous controversies he and his contemporaries indulged in. Of these, and of the rough handling he himself suffered as a young man, Chandrasekhar writes briefly, and with measured charity, leaving room to describe, if only in outline, the ideas that reveal Eddington's

greatness and, in his last years, his colossal failure.

One brief episode as man of action receives proper attention, and the story is indeed well worth telling of how he was conscripted to lead the expedition to observe the 1919 solar eclipse from West Africa, to expiate his wartime sin of being a Quaker and a conscientious objector. This was the eclipse that provided a direct test of Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, a spectacular success which made Eddington hardly less famous than Einstein himself. It turned his mind to applying Relativity in cosmology, away from his studies of stellar motions and of the structure of the stars themselves.

In the earlier period it was he who first saw clearly how the conversion of hydrogen into helium allowed so much energy to be liberated at the expense of mass (Einstein's  $E = mc^2$ ) that the stars could keep going as long as they must have done to make sense of the geological evidence for the age of the Earth. Chandrasekhar rightly bestows high praise on a passage he quotes in full, where Eddington explains his ideas in popular language to the British Association, ending "If, indeed, the sub-atomic energy in the stars is being freely used to maintain their great furnaces, it seems to bring a little nearer to fulfillment our dream of controlling this latent power for the well-being of the human race - or for its suicide". Not even Eddington could have imagined what was to destroy Hiroshima twenty-five years later, nor did he ever know for he had

died the previous year.

Towards the end of the 1920s he grew single-mindedly, possibly pathologically, committed to developing an all-embracing cosmological theory, in which the mathematical structure, including the numerical constants, would emerge as logically necessary consequences of a small number of very general assumptions. Two constants in particular, the ratio of the masses of the proton and the electron, and what is technically known as the reciprocal of the fine-structure constant, he derived as 1847.4 and 136 respectively. We know now that neither figure is correct, the best available values being 1836.11 and 137.036, and Eddington is nowadays remembered, derisively and unfairly, for changing his prediction of exactly 136 to exactly 137 when experimental results seemed to demand it. If his critics would look at his papers of this time they will find more to the matter than a surreptitious addition of 1.

Nevertheless, the best minds among his contemporaries could not follow his reasoning, and it has become clear that the fundamental structure of matter is much more complex than he could have guessed. His heroic attack on the ultimate was doomed, but the idealism that looked towards a totally self-consistent model of the universe is still very much alive. If a unified theory is ever found, Eddington, as one of the early pioneers, will be remembered perhaps even after his solid achievements have conferred on him the anonymous immortality that is the lot of most great men.

## Heavenly spectacles

O. M. Ashford

ADEN and MARJORIE MEINEL  
Sunsets, Twilights and Evening Skies  
163pp. Cambridge University Press. £17.50.  
0521 253022

The subject of this book is the atmospheric optical effects which enhance the beauty of our evening and night skies. Among the better-known and more spectacular of these are the red skies which delight the shepherds and, for those who live in favoured latitudes, the aurora, or merry-dancers. More obscure, but no less exciting, are the green flash, the zodiacal light and the gegenschein. All these, and several more, are here described, and explained.

Unlike some authors who aim to explain science to the "general reader", Aden and Marjorie Meinel have eschewed a dry, systematic approach. They have instead mixed personal experience with science and added a measure of aesthetics. This may not please everybody but it should appeal to those for whom the book was explicitly written, the "inquisitive people who enjoy nature and are interested in knowing the spectrum of appearances of sunset and evening skies". All will enjoy the twelve pages of colour photographs; noteworthy are the pictures of sunsets produced by volcanic ash, a subject in which the authors are particularly interested.

The phrase "general reader" should not be interpreted too literally; a good background in elementary mathematics and physics is neces-

sary for a full understanding of the authors' explanations. On the other hand, a reader with a more professional training may be disturbed by the looseness of style from a scientific point of view. Pressure should not, for example, be equated with density, nor should rainfall and surface temperature be described as the causes of climate - they are part of the climate. It is likewise not strictly correct to say that atmospheric gases are not retained on the moon because their kinetic energy is larger than the escape velocity.

Like Robert Greenler's earlier book *Rainbows, Halos and Glories*, which is essentially complementary to rather than overlapping with the Meinel's volume, this is a bold and, in the main, readable marriage of science with aesthetics.

## Freshwater kinds

Stephen Mills

STEPHEN DOWNES  
The New Compleat Angler  
176pp. Orbis. £9.95.  
0856153534

In 1901 John Buchan praised Isaac Walton for having been the first to endow angling with "a halo of letters which it has never lost". The halo has not entirely illuminated *The New Compleat Angler*, which is at its brightest when seeking quietly to inform and its most shady when striving to amuse.

The book has nothing to do with Isaac Walton, other than being a by-product of his forerunner. It describes anew the fish of Britain's freshwater rivers, how to catch them, how to cook them and how people have exaggerated about their past. Stephen Downes has been anxious to avoid boring his readers on anything that might be construed as indigestible scientific matter. Consequently, he has rather playfully shared out the physiological attributes of fish among the various species with which he deals. The perch, Britain's most colourful fish, prompts him to discuss how fish themselves actually perceive colour. Those in the green, algae-rich polar seas, we are told, have vision biased towards the green area of the spectrum, whereas our own river fish, muddying along in water tinged by the yellowish-reds of decaying vegetation, are mainly red-sensitive.

With the pike he explains the neuromast system by which fish can precisely interpret the displacement of water, not the sound but the

feel of other creatures moving at a distance. Pike, unlike most fish, have these nerve organs exposed in the skin for maximum sensitivity. This enables the "legendary monster", as Downes calls it, to home in on its prey even in the murkiest depths. It must rely on its eyes, however, for the final deadly lunge since its own sudden rush through the water automatically overloads its neuromasts.

So also we learn how chub come to have ears the size of a hare's, why trout may seem to be short-sighted and whether carp really get drunk if they are kept out of the water. This last is a moot point since carp, deprived of oxygen, can apparently obtain energy by fermenting themselves, giving off ethyl alcohol as a result. According to Downes one Indian cyprinid, *Rasbora daniconius*, placed in a dry and hermetically sealed jar, managed to survive for 102 days.

Downes is occasionally too playful and this robs the book of commitment, allowing him to

Michael Joseph ate the publishers of the excellent *Shell Guide to the Birds of Britain and Ireland* (336pp. £7.95. 0 7181 2220 8), a companion volume (though this is inaccurately acknowledged in the bibliography) to James Fisher's equally good history of British birds and birdwatchers, *The Shell Bird Book* (1986). With careful notes by James Ferguson-Leslie (a past president of the British Trust for Ornithology) and the current chairman of the Records Committee of the British Ornithologists' Union which maintains the official list of our birds, set beside small but clear distribution maps by J. T. R. Sharrock (chairman of the

shrub off serious issues. The introduction of the zander, for instance, a voracious Eastern European predator, is regarded by many qualified people as posing a substantial threat to the populations of several native British fish. Downes, however, extends it a slightly pretentious welcome: "I confess I am prejudiced in their favour; but then the first time I met zander was at Bepmay in Champagne. In a fish-plate, along with several of the sparkling local wines. It was a memorable meal; but they would not give me the recipe."

There are dozens of books that waffle about fishing and dozens more that waffle about cooking. That *The New Compleat Angler* goes further is ensured by the eloquence of Martin Knowlton's illustrations. Dazzling still-lives, haunting river pictures - a hint of an angler reflected in the ripples, a glimpse of a hooked trout turning in the depths - no angler could look at them without his rod-arm and reel-finger twitching.

European Ornithological Atlas Committee) and precise and very lively illustrations by Ian Willis (who painted the fine figures of the raptors in Volume Two of *Birds of the Western Palearctic*, 1980), this exemplary guide is sensibly divided into two sections - the Regulars, birds we might see, and the Vagrants, birds we might not. But if you do have reason to believe that a Great White Egret is after your goldfish, an Eleonora's Falcon is pinching your sparrow, and a Blue-cheeked Bee-eater is keeping your quail down, then this is the best all-purpose small bird book yet produced. Will take you anywhere it goes. R. D. M.

## Universal sightings

Colin Ronan

PATRICK MOORE, GARRY HUNT, IAIN NICOLSON and PETER CATTERMOLE  
The Atlas of the Solar System  
464pp. Mitchell Beazley, in association with the Royal Astronomical Society. £19.95.  
085533 468 1  
NIGEL HENBEST and MICHAEL MARTEN  
The New Astronomy  
240pp. Cambridge University Press. £12.50.  
0521 25683 6

Studies of our planetary system have passed through many stages. The earliest were concerned with planetary motion, first about the Earth and then, in the sixteenth century, with a fully fledged heliocentric system. This initiated a revolution in thought that culminated with Newton's mathematical theory of universal gravitation.

But these were all theoretical ideas. Not until after the first astronomical use of the telescope in 1609 was the physical nature of the planets really considered. This turned out to be a difficult field of endeavour, primarily because our atmosphere hampered observation, limiting the detail that could be discerned even under the most favourable conditions. Planetary photography was unsatisfactory and drawings by experienced observers ran the danger of personal bias, as Percival Lowell's famous sketches of Martian canals bear witness. The one body on which terrestrial observation was adequate, though limited, was the Moon.

Now all this has changed. Within the past twenty-five years there has been a revolution in observing the solar system because we can now launch spacecraft to the planets and observe from beyond the terrestrial atmosphere. *The Atlas of the Solar System*, which is a compilation from a series of more detailed books on the Sun's planetary family, is an up-to-date record from the wealth of detailed information astronomers now possess.

A beautifully illustrated book, it enshrines the latest studies from space and welds them into a superb graphic description of the entire planetary system. Here Patrick Moore and Garry Hunt have been aided by Iain Nicolson, who has written about the Sun, and Peter Cattermole whose speciality is planetary geology. As seems inevitable with a compilation like this there is some fluctuation of intellectual level; here and there the text assumes a modicum of scientific knowledge, though not as much as Cambridge's recent *The New Solar System*. So *The Atlas* usefully fills a vacant niche and, in spite of the odd slip here and there, does so superbly, being a readable as well as pictorial cornucopia of present knowledge, with the additional bonus of providing a description of planetary spacecraft and tables giving future positions of the planets up to 1990.

*The New Astronomy*, with title and headings provided in a mirror-image italic as if to emphasize its novelty, also pays tribute to new observing techniques. But its purview is not restricted to the solar system; it takes the whole universe as its theme. It is concerned with results using optical and radio telescopes, as well as orbiting observatories devoted to studying the sky at wave-lengths with restricted visibility from Earth, and even wave-lengths that cannot be observed at all by ground-based astronomers. So we have pictures and descriptions of what has been found from radio, infra-red, ultraviolet, X-ray, and even gamma-ray exploration of the universe; as well as from optical studies using advanced photographic methods. Moreover, the results depicted here also use the new skills in computer processing which provide evidence in the form of false but revealing colour images.

Nigel Henbest's text is a model of clarity. The false colour pictures, and the computer images built up using information from terrestrial as well as space observatories, are here transformed into clear guides to conditions even in the furthest depths of space. The picture selection is admirable too: Michael Marten has made excellent use of his Science Photo Library. This book - the first to present and explain "new astronomy" to a wide public - deserves every success.

## Make mine Médoc

Edmund Penning-Rowsell

HUBRECHT DUIJKER  
The Great Wine Châteaux of Bordeaux  
200pp.  
085533 469 X  
The Good Wines of Bordeaux  
200pp.  
085533 472 X  
Translated by Danielle de Froimont Associates  
Mitchell Beazley. £13.95 each.

The department of the Gironde embraces what is surely the most interesting wine region in the world: not only because it has a fair claim to producing the best red and the best sweet white wines, but also because there is such variety in their style and quality, even from property to property within the same commune. As a result it has attracted writers to a degree unequalled by other wine areas; and not so much professional authors or wine merchants as amateurs and consumers. Curiously enough nearly all have been foreigners to France, perhaps because many of the natives seem to believe that knowledge of French wines is inherited. Among the first of these foreign amateur wine writers was Charles Cocks, an English schoolmaster living in Bordeaux and translator of French anti-clerical literature, who in 1850 published the first edition of *Bordeaux et Ses Vins*, which, now known as Cocks et Férét, and in its thirteenth edition, is the "bible of Bordeaux", unrivalled as a wine region reference book elsewhere in the world. It is true that Bordeaux savants have recently written important books about the vineyards that surround them, but they write as historians, whereas the foreign authors have generally written as consumers for other consumers. Today much more down-to-earth and exact information is demanded concerning the more than 3,000 vineyard properties bearing the self-given prefix of "château".

Of this new generation of writers none is more capable of providing the consumers with what they may be expected to want than the Dutch journalist Hubrecht Duijker. Duijker has also written about Burgundy and other wine districts, but his first book was *The Great Wine Châteaux of Bordeaux*, originally published in Holland and Britain in 1975, and now in a new translation, revised and brought up to date. In the foreword to his most recent work, *The Good Wines of Bordeaux*, he states that its preparation involved visiting 200 châteaux (nearly 100 others had formed the subject of *Great Wine Châteaux*), tasting a couple of thousand wines in the course of two months and visiting châteaux five or six days a week from early morning to dusk. The result of this hard work is that both these books are as accurate and as up to date as any such book can be on a wine that inevitably alters in an area where significant changes are always taking place (four important estates changed hands last year alone).

The first English edition of *The Great Wine Châteaux of Bordeaux*, which was devoted to the classed-growth Médocs, the *premiers grands crus classés* of St-Émilion and two leading Pomerols, did not attract the attention it deserved. A new edition is welcome, not least because since the mid-1970s there has been a realignment of the traditional Bordeaux wine trade, an extension of the vineyards, an expansion in output of many of the classified estates and a series of excellent, interesting vintages. Accurate and amply informative as ever, Duijker has no hesitation in criticizing in a modest way those properties apparently not producing wines worthy of their classification. The same applies to his comments on their vintages - though not everyone will be so generous about the 1972 claret and the generally charming 1974.

*The Good Wines of Bordeaux* is even more useful and timely. In recent years the *crus classés* and their equivalents in the other leading districts have become increasingly expensive, a number have become objects of speculation and investment. In many cases by individuals and organizations with little or no intention of ever drinking a cork and who look only to make a capital gain out of their *en primeur* purchases. As a result the proprietors, aware of the high profile realized in the London auc-

tion-rooms, have increased their opening prices in order to secure a larger return themselves. This has not been the case with the *crus bourgeois* - a semi-official classification restricted to the Médoc but loosely used elsewhere - where the growers have greatly improved their vineyards and wine-making in the past decade and now offer some of the best value in claret. Duijker's new book is valuable too because the estates it covers, though numerous, are nothing like so well known as the *crus classés*, and it provides a guide to the properties, often very large, that lie in such little-known communes as St-Seurin-de-Cadourne in the Haut-Médoc and Bégadan in the Bas-Médoc. Seventy-two of these are described in at least a page apiece.

## For browsing bibbers

Ray Ockenden

HUGH JOHNSON  
Wine Companion: The New Encyclopaedia of Wines, Vineyards and Winemakers.  
544pp. Mitchell Beazley. £14.95.  
085533 419 3

Readers of the novels of Charles Morgan will recall the exchange: "What shall it be, Marie, the Chamberlin or the Latour? 'Am I to choose? Then, the Musigny. It's too warm a night for the Chamberlin, and that Latour will improve yet.'" Few experience such agonies of choice; fewer still could draw fine distinctions between Burgundies. But then Marie is French - unlike the remarkable Hugh Johnson.

Hugh Johnson comes in various sizes, from vest-pocket nip to coffee-table magnum. His *Wine Companion* is essentially a Good Loo book, like Brewer and the lighter anthologies. Unlike the glossier *World Atlas of Wine*, with its photographs and beautiful maps, the *Companion* is a compendious reference work, ideal for settling doubts and bets, and above all for browsing; appropriately, since it aims to encourage serious browsing among wines of different qualities and countries.

The introduction honestly acknowledges that this *Companion* is above all a companion volume to the *Atlas* and the *Pocket Wine Book*. It does not reveal which vintages to buy or when to drink them (information that requires annual updating); no entry in the otherwise useful index guides you if you have forgotten the meaning of Blanc de Blancs or Passe-tout-

All the Sauternes and Barsac classed growths are described in detail, in some ways a more difficult task than for the red wines, as there is less variety in style and achievement. All the St-Émilion *grands crus classés* with more than a domestic reputation were also visited, as well as twenty-one Pomerols, whose wines are so popular in Holland and in Belgium that they are far from being widely found on British wine lists. Altogether eighty-two properties outside the Médoc are dealt with in detail; on another sixty within the whole region extended notes have been written. Finally, the fact that the author deals largely with recent vintages is particularly useful, since it is these which are most likely to be available in Britain.

For such things you need the pocket-book, as you will if you are hesitating over which wines to serve with particular dishes. The *Companion*, clear about its priorities, instead advises the reader what to eat with particular wines.

The most helpful part of the book for the general reader is the final section, "Enjoying Wine", which gives knowledgeable and undogmatic answers to practical questions. The bulk of the book is rather for the semi-expert imbibor or investor: an encyclopedia covering the world's principal wine-producing areas (except the Soviet Union, which is relegated to a footnote). Well over a third of this part is devoted to France, and another third to Italy, Germany (relatively thinly represented) and the United States.

Johnson helpfully selects certain "top wines" for special attention and discusses how they are made. Elsewhere, information beyond the purely statistical is eclectic: in Bordeaux, the author fingers variously over history, houses, their owners, or outstanding vintages. In other countries he concentrates more on regions and wine-makers; few vineyard names are mentioned in the German section (the *Atlas* is fuller here).

In appearance, the *Companion* belies its encyclopedic nature. Marginalia and summaries appear like notebook jottings, not always meaningfully placed; the jaunty illustrations serve rather to lighten the text than to inform. The sometimes fussy layout actually suits a book which is at once erudite and unashamedly personal. Even Johnson's unemphatic comments are shrewd: his delicate notes on Chamberlin and Musigny amply vindicate Marie's choice.

## Grape expectations

Keith Jeffery

LEONARD S. BERNSTEIN  
The Official Guide to Wine Snobbery  
160pp. Elm Tree Books. £5.95.  
0241 110769

Anyone who thinks that Málaga is a holiday resort, or an Inglenook part of a house, who would hesitate to describe a wine as "chunky", or who perhaps knows just enough to become embarrassed when ordering Mateos Rosé in a restaurant should purchase this book. It reveals that with a modicum of knowledge, a considerable amount of money (*grands crus classés* come expensive) and a truly contemptuous attitude towards humankind the average imbibor can become a fully fledged wine snob.

This is a handy book of etiquette for those who aspire to the "naïve domestic burgundy" school of wine-appreciation. There is much useful advice of a general nature. A wine cellar should be stocked with bottles which the snob will enjoy talking about, rather than necessarily enjoy drinking. At a blind wine tasting - and this is the single most sensible hint in the book - the author recommends: "sit next to an expert". Leonard S. Bernstein instructs us what we should do with the cork when offered it in a restaurant and lays down which wines are "in" and which "out". Armed with this volume one will never commit the solecism of ordering, Monton Cadet, even on the ground that it

"tastes nice", nor shock one's guests by holding a wine glass by the bowl.

The trainee snob will learn that the white-wine-with-fish / red-wine-with-meat code is no more than a very rough guide which should at some stage publicly be ignored. (Of considerably more use, though possibly not very snobbish, is Gavin Lyall's iron rule for parties: white wine for carpets and red for lino.) One of the chief wine-with-food dilemmas concerns Sauternes, since Château d'Yquem is "the world's most IN white wine" and therefore essential drinking for wine snobs. In Britain such a sweet wine would normally be served at the end of a meal with pudding or dessert, yet the Sauternais themselves would argue emphatically that the wine ought never to be taken with sweet food of any sort. They would rather drink it with *foie gras* at the beginning of a meal. It is said that Russian aristocrats used to drink d'Yquem with everything - but look what happened to them.

The complete wine snob is a bit like a well-regarded Bordeaux *crus bourgeois* (snobbery is *always bourgeois*) - say, de Pez or Citran. He should have a fine colour, steady legs and a good nose - both for smelling and for looking down. Perhaps a little harsh when young, he might well eventually develop a smooth, rounded and enjoyable character. But, ultimately, the only thing to do with both wine and snob is to lock them in a cellar (preferably not the same one) and ignore them for as long as possible.

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We regret an error of transmission whereby the reference, in E. S. Rice's review of Naphthall Lewis's *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (January 27), to the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* was, wrongly, printed as "the *Journal of the Egyptological Association*".

G.L. Hersey's *Architecture, Poetry and Number in the Royal Palace at Caserta* is published by the MIT Press; not the University of Chicago Press, as stated in the TLS review of October 14 1983.